

Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci
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Status of Women within Medieval English Society in Comparison
with Women Depicted in Middle English Romances

Diplomová práce

Autor: Bc. Tereza Kalousková

Vedoucí: Mgr. David Livingstone, Ph.D

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PŘEDKLÁDÁ:	ADRESA	OSOBNÍ ČÍSLO
Bc. KALOUSKOVÁ Tereza	Fr. Formana 33, Ostrava - Dubina	F130512

TÉMA ČESKY:

Postavení žen v anglické středověké společnosti v komparaci s postavením žen v romancích psaných střední angličtinou

TÉMA ANGLICKY:

Status of Women within Medieval English society in comparison with Women Depicted in Middle English Romances

VEDOUcí PRÁCE:

Mgr. David Livingstone, Ph.D. - KAA

ZÁSADY PRO VYPRACOVÁNÍ:

Práce se bude zabývat komparací historických pramenů (vybraných romancí), kde bude upřednostněno zobrazení ženských hrdinek, a postavení ženy ve středověké společnosti. Z celkové komparace daných skutečností by mělo vyplynout, že se tyto romance neshodávají se situací tehdejší společnosti s tím, že situace ženy nebyla ulehčena populární literaturou té doby. Dvorská kultura sice ctíla ženy jako určitý symbol, nicméně se na ně nahlíželo jako na druhořadé pohlaví. Práce se bude také zabývat studiem tehdejšího publika a čtenářů této vybrané literatury, popřípadě komu byla primárně určena.

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Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci na téma "Status of Women within Medieval English Society in Comparison with Women Depicted in Middle English Romances" vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

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Podpis

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1. Introduction

The culture of Medieval Europe was produced by medieval society. This statement might not possess any informative value at first glance, but it might provide an answer to the question whether historians can study medieval literature as a source. Literature belongs to the cultural heritage of each society and it can be used as one of the important types of sources, especially in a historical period, which is indigent in the number of other sources. Storytelling is one of the oldest sectors of culture, accompanying art and religion. The British Isles have a rich history in those regards, which is imprinted in their founding stories established in later chronicles written by the Venerable Bede or Geoffrey of Monmouth, heroic myths, and legends. Each culture which came or invaded the Isles, brought their culture which helped to create the final rich and diverse environment, which served as a reservoir for subsequent authors. It is difficult to establish the original Brits and the proposed thesis is not concerned with this particular issue, but Celts, Romans, Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Vikings and the French brought their oral and written tradition and implanted them into the British cultural heritage and their traces can be found in Medieval literature .

The proposed research in the thesis is focused on a medieval genre known as the chivalric romance and specifically the position of women depicted in them. This particular approach is not novel. Several literary historians use medieval literature as a window into the social structure and reality of medieval times, although agreement can be reached that it is a highly deceptive approach, which must be used with caution. Chivalric romances, one of the first medievally speaking “global bestsellers”, can serve as an illustration. Those heroic stories might be helpful for several fields of studies, namely now more than ever, the popular questions of masculinity, sexuality, women studies, gender studies, philosophy and theology.

The period studied in this work covers the beginning of the presence of chivalric romances in England up to the reign of Edward III. It should be emphasized, that the literature examined in this period was heavily influenced by French culture, despite the fact that the end of the period falls under the first part of the Hundred Years' War.

The thesis consists of three main parts. First, I would like to discuss courtly love and the chivalric romances as a literary genre, its origin and possible inspirations. I would like to work with the theories represented by C. S. Lewis in his work *The Allegory of*

Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition (1936) and the work written by R. Howard Bloch entitled *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (1991). I would also like to discuss the constitution of the medieval audience of the romances and the relationship of women towards literature, if any existed.

The second part of my thesis will discuss English medieval history for a needed frame of the thesis' topic and the position of women within the society with a focus on women in situations similar to those represented in the selected chivalric romances.

The following and final part of this research consists of a detailed description of chosen romances and the roles held by heroines and their fate in the discussed works. The question of which romances should be discussed in this work was very problematic. Since this genre possesses certain topoi, I have chosen representative works of several groups or topics which can be traced in the works. *Floris and Blancheflour*, which represents a chivalric romance inspired by the French production, contains a main heroine Blancheflour, who is a traditional non-active damsel in distress. The second chivalric romance is purely English, *Havelok the Dane*. This romance mirrors the historical realities of older times and the main female character, Goldeboru, is a highly born princess, whose knight and husband has to prove himself to be worthy of her. The last chosen romance is *The King of Tars*, which represent a romance, where the main female character, a nameless princess, does not need a knight in order to be saved. She is an active participant and her own saviour. The romance is an example of an allegory, which represents a dichotomist fight between good and evil, Christianity and Islam, as seen through the medieval prism. All the chosen chivalric romances have been edited and their editions were posted online on the Robbins Library Digital Projects on the webpage of the University of Rochester¹, whose versions I will use for the analysis.

¹ "Robbins Library Digital Projects," accessed October 19, 2015, <http://d.lib.rochester.edu>.

2. Chivalric Romances

Chivalric romances were one of the most popular genres in secular medieval society. One might argue that medieval Europe did not leave as many transcribed literary works as the following periods. It can be traced, nevertheless, which genres and topics were popular within the sources which are preserved for our research. While the Church concentrated on its own existence and on the rules, which should have helped to establish authority over the laymen, secular society was eager for amusement of a more earthy nature.

Chivalric romances, which emerged enigmatically at the beginning of the twelfth century², arrived into a culture which was already quite rich with literary works. England had already established its history with its famous founders and heroic figures and became a rich source of stories for the authors of the medieval chivalric romances. When chivalric romance entered England, the Venerable Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, which deals not only with the mythical kings and Christianity of early medieval times and further, is already established as one of the most important works written about English history. Geoffrey of Monmouth creates one of the most influential literary pieces of medieval England, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, when the discussed genre produces its first works³. His work had an enormous impact on the ensuing authors with its scope over several centuries.

The literature of a certain time copies the habits and patterns found within its society. Therefore, the literature preceding the chivalric romances found on the Isle, is heavily marked by the mixture of tribes that inhabited England. While Roman society brought softness and culture of the matured Roman Empire, Anglo-Saxon tribes brought the cult of firm and somehow brutal men – warriors. It is important to say that the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes did not bring decline on the Isle, but the gradual migration of those large Germanic tribes incurred by the political instability of the Celtic government was followed by their culture as well. Anglo-Saxon culture should not be called savage-like in comparison with the Classical one. The difference is that they were influenced by different environment. *Beowulf* might be a good example fitting into the picture of the cult of warrior. Even other works, such as the early Christian poem *The Dream of the*

² Nigel Saul, *Chivalry in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 37.

³ Geoffrey z Monmouthu, *Dějiny britských králů*, trans. Jana Fuksová (Praha: Argo, 2010), 5-6.

Rood, carry the celebratory voice of the warriors⁴. The Anglo-Saxon production cannot be considered as a work of misogynistic writers because works about women did not survive in large numbers. Even if they did, the image of women is not entirely clear such is the case of *The Wife's Lament*, which is arguably considered to be written in the genre of *frauenlied*, woman's songs⁵.

Another culture came to England with the invasion of Normans. Normans were another German tribe from northern Europe, who were given the fief in what today is known as Normandy in the year 910, in return for a more peaceful non-invading policy towards France. They underwent a change by the year 1066. They accepted the French norms and spoke French. Many historians argue that Normans were initiators of the feudal system on the isle, but the change did not happen abruptly. Anglo-Saxons and Vikings prepared and started the changes which culminated into the feudal society.⁶ After the unruly years of civil war between Stephen and Matilda, another French wave came with the most influential medieval house of kings, the House of Plantagenet. It was the Plantagenet house which created the bridge between France and England, which brought chivalric romances to England and its literature.

2.1. The Emergence of Courtly Love

Chivalric romances would not exist without its main theme, courtly love. Therefore, before the discussion of the genre of chivalric romances, it is important to briefly introduce the phenomena of courtly love. The term *courtly love* or *amour Courtois* was coined only in the year 1883 by the French medievalist Gaston Paris in his essay about Chrétien de Troyes' romance *Lancelot or the Knight of the Cart*.⁷

The question how courtly love commenced into the lives of people of the top layers of the medieval feudal society has several answers supported by diverse theories. Numerous impacts or inspirational currents can be found in the genre of literature dealing

⁴ Stephen Greenblatt, ed., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 6.

⁵ Stephen Greenblatt, ed., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 114.

⁶ Martyn Whittock, *Life in the Middle Ages* (London: Robinson, 2009), 29.

⁷ John C. Moore, "'Courtly Love': A Problem of Terminology," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 40 (1979): 621, accessed August 20, 2015, doi:10.2307/2709362.

with courtly love. Roger Boase in his study *The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love* discusses thoroughly several theories of origin, such as Hispano-Arabic influence, where the literature of Spain under the hegemony of Muslims in the years of 711 – 1492 influenced the literature of Southern France. He also mentions theories connected with the Cathar movement emerging in 12th century France, the impact of Neoplatonism, the Marian cult, and others.⁸

France, respectively its southern regions, such as Burgundy and Aquitaine, reached by the end of the 11th century a certain economic status, which created a new lifestyle of the rulers.⁹ In the early medieval times, rulers had to travel in their domain for several reason, such as the political surveillance over their vassals, but also because of economic reasons. The agriculture was not able to support such a large amount of people in one place for a longer period of time. It was economically exhausting to host a suzerain. Therefore when the agriculture was able to uphold a court at one place, several cities became more important than others. Staying at one place have several advantages but by this step the ruler is losing his surveillance. Hence a court with young future vassals emerges, where ladies in waiting and the ruler's company swells in importance. The court becomes an important place for politics and new alliances, and it is here where lays the origin of courtly love. Courtly love might be understood as means of political and diplomatic relations, where marriage was an important commodity which needed to be taken into consideration. A court therefore becomes a playing field where emotions are cards in the hands of the players.

What is then courtly love? Alexander J. Denomy in his article describes courtly love as follows: "Courtly love is a species of that movement inherent in the soul of man towards a desired object. It is this object, the final object, which specifies love and differentiates its manifestations one from the other."¹⁰ There is a difference between the carnal love, the desire, and purely platonic love. *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* describes courtly love as a cult of heterosexual love which is followed by "an elaborate

⁸ Roger Boase, *The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977), 62-99.

⁹George T. Beech, "Aquitaine," in *Medieval France: An Encyclopedia*, eds. Kible, William W, and Grover A. Zinn, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995), 105.

¹⁰ Alexander J. Denomy, "Courtly Love and Courtliness," *Speculum* 28 (1953): 44, accessed August 21, 2015, doi: 10.2307/2847180.

code of behaviour evolved around the tormented male lover's abject obedience to a disdainful, idealized lady, who was usually his social superior.”¹¹ Another fact frequently stated, is that it was the court of William IX, Count of Poitiers, where the courtly love came into existence. William IX is considered to be the first troubadour, nevertheless there are some historians, such as Herbert Moller, who argue that there might have been other works similar to those of William IX and other artists present in his court, which did not survive or were not recorded.¹²

The nature of the French feudal system lead into disintegrated state of smaller estates, where the local lords swell on importance, in some cases higher than the French king. Therefore, a new form of a knight emerges. The knight who is not rich enough to afford his own estate, to get married, and who is bound to another lord.¹³ There were situations, where several of those knight emerged in one court, where they saw an eponymy of a true lady, the wife of their lord. And there is the difference between the platonic love and love of a carnal character. It is hardly expected to find a lord, who would be willing to let their wives to carry a romantic affair with his warriors. Even though marriage was hardly a relationship based on love, since it was more of a politically advantageous deal, fidelity was crucial. Love had to be found somewhere else, platonically expressed in an extra-marital sphere.

The character of women in focus are described by Herbert Moller in his article as follows:

“The beloved is not an ordinary woman; she cannot be replaced by any other one. She is the woman of whom it is not fitting to speak ill, even if one feels unloved and rejected by her. This love is ideally limited to one object and that forever, and the rejected or neglected lover cannot turn away from her.”¹⁴

¹¹ “Courtly love,” in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Chris Baldick, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 53.

¹² Herbert Moller “The Meaning of Courtly Love,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 73 (1960): 39, accessed August 21, 2015, doi: 10.2307/537601.

¹³ John Bell Henneman, Jr, “Chivalry,” in *Medieval France: An Encyclopedia*, eds. Kible, William W, and Grover A. Zinn, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995), 411-412.

¹⁴ Herbert Moller, “The Meaning of Courtly Love,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 73 (1960): 41.

The extract shows what is very much different and novel in the discourse of medieval texts of this character. Firstly, it centralizes love. Love is the new religion, which is put on a pedestal, and it is worth adoration. The cult of the warrior was enriched by the strongest element of love. The impact of courtly love is foremost in the aspect of the position of women in the medieval society, needless to say of the highest economic and social status. A sentiment and emotions in the relationship between a lady and a knight emerged and enriched the discourse. There were many texts discussing women, such as a vast number of misogynistic works, but this is the genre which actually mentions women in a positive light, even though hardly overstepping the boundaries which were drawn for women by the society. This untouchable ideal of a woman is fitting for the feudal society, as it will be discussed later in a section about C.S. Lewis' work.

It was such a huge phenomenon within the culture of those days that it shows its full establishment in the literature satirizing this kind of love. Gerhild Sholtz William in his article "License to Laugh: Making Fun of Chivalry in Some Medieval Texts" discusses several topics, which are usually present in those satirical works. He mentions "casuistries, knightly vanity and thickheadedness as well as a certain rough-necked robber-knight mentality."¹⁵

2.2. The Allegory of Love

C. S. Lewis in his introduction to courtly love said, that medieval literature is not tempting for modern readers because of its symbolism and hidden meaning. He claimed that modern world hold an opinion that '*art means what it says*' or even that *art is meaningless*."¹⁶ Into what extent is the modern world of Lewis the modern world of the twenty-first century, is highly disputable, since the book was written in 1936. Zygmunt Bauman, a British sociologist of Polish-Jewish origin, calls the modern times liquid, with no solid structure and rules within the society, which suffers from liquid fears of abstract ideas.¹⁷ Bauman deals with the question of the modern world and consumerism of the

¹⁵ Gerhild Scholz Williams, "License to Laugh: Making Fun of Chivalry in Some Medieval Texts," *Monatshefte* 78 (1986): 26, accessed August 20, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30159200>.

¹⁶ C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 1.

¹⁷ Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 4-6.

modern society, where in my opinion, the demands of the general public on easy digestibility of the popular literature is stronger than in the 1930s. For medieval readers the symbolism was clear and understandable. This is visible not only in the works of medieval authors, but also in the religion, which was dominant in the medieval society. The ornaments and paintings in the churches were dependent on the knowledge of the believers. Church in general gave the society a solid set of rules, which, as Bauman states, is absent in the modern age.

C. S. Lewis puts the origin of courtly love into the structure of thoughts of Christianity, feudal system and the heritage of previous social groups. This is not innovative in the contemporary literary history, but the whole picture presented by Lewis was new. Lewis stressed the importance of sentiment in the courtly love, how despairing and tragic is the love between the lady and the knight, who is in the end saved by the God, who never betrays his worshippers.¹⁸ Lewis states that the romance invented by the French troubadours and poets is truly original, since in the preceding works women equalled to the lover's possession, such as his house and slaves.¹⁹ One of the popular medieval "bestsellers" was Ovid's *Art of Love* which might be taken as a misogynistic work by some mostly feministic literary historians.²⁰ Lewis says that it was a highly satirical work which changes the peculiarities of love into a major subject, which should be taken seriously. The question is whether the satire of Ovid survived into the medieval times and medieval writers took Ovid seriously, because anti-feminist writers of clergy used *Art of Love* as a weapon pointing out the whimsical behaviour of women.

The new sentiment of love occurred according to Lewis in the form of four marks, Humility, Courtesy, Adultery and Religion of Love.²¹ Humility is explained by the relationship between a vassal and a lord. The intensity and love, which is felt by the vassal, who is proud to serve his master and who succumbs to his commands, is the cornerstone. The superior direction of this love copies the love between a lady of a higher social status and a mere knight. The knight is humbled and he serves his lady since he is her "man". Lewis speaks about feudalization of love.²² In the previous literary works, such as Old English poems, the warm relationship between a knight, who is happy to

¹⁸ C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, 3.

¹⁹ C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, 4.

²⁰ Alcuin Blamires, ed., *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 17.

²¹ C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, 12.

²² C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, 2.

serve his master as well as God, is visible. The importance of a fight for one's country and ruler is one of the most important themes. All those aspects copy themselves into the behaviour of the knight towards his lady.

Courtesy is also connected with feudal relations. The woman in the centre of the court possesses all virtues, which are connected with this phenomenon. The elegant, gentle and soft features come from her and her damsels, who are being treated as delicate flowers worth worshipping. This courtly play and sophisticated seduction is purely platonic. As it was already stated above, the deed of adultery per se is not conceivable. Lewis states, that the troubadours of Provence were more concerned with the rivals in the game of affection than the lady's husband. This proves the friskiness of the genre, whose promises were hardly applicable in reality.

Adultery is connected with two important aspects of a medieval life. The first one was marriage. As it was already stated above, its character was not different from the marriage of earlier times, where women were taken as a piece of property. As Lewis says, "any idealization of sexual love, in a society where marriage is purely utilitarian, must begin by being an idealization of adultery."²³ Adultery was also connected with Christianity and their view upon the marriage. Courtly love is connected with court where people of higher political status occurred. The number of nobility was restricted. Churchmen held power in regards of whom they were allowed to marry, since the degree of kinship was wider than nowadays.²⁴ Sexual encounter within the marriage was natural, nevertheless there was a degree of sin included as well. The dependent aspect of it was desire, which was sinful unlike the act itself. Passion was a sin which deserved penitence. But it is needed for a conception of child, since women have to be aroused in order to conceive.²⁵ Adultery in medieval chivalric romances and the production of other literary genres is celebration of love, not actual physical deed.

Religion of Love and the god Amor is partly an inheritance of Ovid and the antiquated tradition and partly the shift from love towards one's soigneur to love towards

²³ C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, 13.

²⁴ Constance B. Bouchard, "Consanguinity and Noble Marriages in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," *Speculum* 56 (1981): 271, accessed October 18, 2015, doi: 10.2307/2846935.

²⁵ Claude Thomasset, "The Nature of Woman," in *A History of Women in the West, II. Silences of the Middle Ages*, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 50-54.

his lady. Lewis states that it occurred as a rival or a parody of the real religion.²⁶ According to Lewis, which is shown on a short study of a French poet, the irony of Ovid was fully understood, the only difference between the ancient poet and the medieval contemporaries was, that they applied the satire into the only religion they knew and practised, Christianity.²⁷

It might have started as a parody, but it overgrew into something bigger. That is one of the questions which remains unanswered by Lewis. Whether it was the parody which taught its readers the new feeling, or whether this already existing sentimental love inspired the poets.

Lewis states in an example of analysis of Andreas Capellanus' *De Arte Honeste Amandi*, that there is an important message underlying the whole relationship between Religion of Love and the Church. Both of them are important as love and God himself are eternal and solemn. The battle between good and evil is presented in both, the Bible and courtly literature. While a believer reaches salvation after defeat of evil, in literature love is worthy only after a number of perils. Love is not true if there is not a journey filled up with obstructions and danger towards it. In the hour of need, Lewis says, is clearly certain what is more important, whether love or God. God is real, while love is an ideal not fitting for the reality.²⁸

C.S. Lewis also deals with allegory and its importance in the medieval literature. He uses the work of Chrétien de Troyes as an example. Chrétien de Troyes is considered to be one of the most important writers of the whole medieval period. He was an author who introduced the theme of Arthurian legends into the literature and commenced the whole corpus of various stories connected to the mythical figure of King Arthur.²⁹ The medium of allegory is dominant in Chrétien's work. He uses allegory as a mean of expression of the inner emotional quest of the main characters. Lewis states that allegory as such is a natural part of our lives and overall understanding of the world of the twentieth century³⁰. He is trying to find the origin of allegory in the Classical times. He says that allegory came from the polytheistic religion, where it was very important in order to

²⁶ C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, 18.

²⁷ C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, 20.

²⁸ C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, 42-43.

²⁹ Roberta R. Krueger, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. Roberta R. Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3-4.

³⁰ C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, 67-72.

understand the world people of those times lived in. Lewis, who was Catholic, states, that polytheistic religion is a mere phrase of the development of religion, which matures into monotheism. The Medieval literature, which was not keen on new approaches and originality, did copy the style of Ancient philosophers, such as Plato, and used allegory plentifully.

The Allegory of Love contains a detailed study of *The Romance de la Rose*, Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower and Thomas Usk as well. His approach towards the medieval literature is very important, because it tries to explain the works of various medieval writers in order to be understood through the prism of modern readers.

2.3. Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love

Another interesting approach to the origin of courtly love is the approach of R. Howard Bloch. He claims that medieval production of misogynic works, that is works discussing the hatred towards women, led into the invention of the love as it is understood in the twentieth and twenty-first century. In Bloch's approach, all the works which contain the word "woman" are misogynistic. He states that antifeminism should be understood as both genre and the topos as well.³¹ Medieval writers were taken seriously when they quoted Church Fathers and other authorities praised by the educated society. Because of a fragmentation and sum of works which were popular during the studied period, authors used so called *florigerium*, which is in a translation gathering of flowers. *Florigeria* were compilations of important writings of the Church Fathers and philosophers. The repetition of quotes led into a generally accepted truth. The works of some of the most important writers were heavily filled with antifeminism, which helped to create the general category of a woman.³²

The antifeminist approach of some medieval writers is easily understandable, when the environment of the writers is taken into consideration. It is important to consider in what kind of world they lived in and sort of people they were. Education was almost a privilege of the clergy, which was slowly opening to a broader minority of the secular population. It is hard to write about women, when you are forbidden to marry

³¹ R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 7.

³² R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*, 90.

one or even meet one in some cases. It might be dangerous to state that the indictment of woeful nature of women should help monks and prelates to deal with the restriction of their situation. Nonetheless it could be one of the reason for their hatred. It is important to say that their opinions were not their own ideas. They stated that they only copy ideas of others, in a fashion of an evasion of one's responsibilities. They still helped to create a whole discourse of a medieval misogyny by the character of their works and the approach they had.

The most repetitive features which were reproached with women were flippancy, perfidiousness, garrulity, concupiscence, voluptuousness and allurements. Women were shallow snakes and creators of all evil, with Eve being the first of them. One of the copybook example is Marbod of Rennes, a teacher at the cathedral school in Angers, living in the 10th century. Marbod of Rennes in *Liber decem Capitulorum* created a twin chapter, where he praised and attacked women. The negative description is as follows:

Countless are the traps which the scheming enemy has set throughout the world's paths and plains: but among them the greatest- and the one scarcely anybody can evade – is woman. Woman the unhappy source, evil root, and corrupt offshoot, who brings to birth every sort of outrage throughout the world. For she instigates quarrels, conflicts, dire dissensions; she provokes fighting between old friends, divides affections, shatter families. But these are trivia I speak of: she dislodges kings and princes from the throne, makes nations clash, convulses towns, destroys cities, multiplies slaughters, brews deadly poisons. She hurls conflagration as she rampages through farmsteads and fields. In sum, there lurks in the universe no manifestation of evil in which woman does not claim some part for herself.³³

It is important to point out the presence of the word trivia in the citation. The description preceding the word can be found in the works of Ovid and St. Jerome as well.³⁴ Marbod was not the only one but it cannot be said that all the writers were misogynistic. There were some who were positively concerned with the position of

³³ Maribod of Rennes, "The Femme Fatale," in *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*, ed. Alcuin Blamires, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 100.

³⁴ Alcuin Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*, 100.

women in the society. The most important aspect of the medieval life was to be a good Christian and to reach salvation. Therefore, it was important to live according to rules and to be a good person. That did not depend on their sex. Another question is whether some works were not actually taken as a satire or a mere practise. The writers could have trained their writing and argumentation skills on an easy subject, such as women.

According to Bloch all those works created a woman essence, by which they removed women from the real world and a real realm.³⁵ Women were perceived as objects of men's thoughts, from purely evil philippics against women to their decorative element. That would be fitting for the male dominant medieval society, where they held a major position and where women belonged to men and were part of their property.

Bloch is surprisingly courageous in regards of stating when and how the sentiment of love came into existence. Lewis shows possible routes which created courtly love and the change of environment with the statement "every one has heard of courtly love, and every one knows that it appears quite suddenly at the end of the eleventh century."³⁶ On the other hand, Bloch states that there was actually a precise moment which change the thinking of the society.

That moment of change according to Bloch was preceded by several degrees. The first one was, as already discussed period of "woman equals the devil's gateway", heavily influenced by the Church fathers. The second moment was the adoration of virginity, which was a pure essence, connected with the cult of the Virgin Mary.³⁷ This moment in history brought hope and levelled the position of women in the spectre of damnation. Eve was a woman of despair who brought death upon humankind. Mary, on the other hand, is the woman who gave hope and who delivered the saviour, Jesus Christ.

Period following the Cult of Virgin Mary was connected with courtly love. The period where "the fatalism of the look inherent to the courtly definition of love as an inborn suffering derived from the sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex,"³⁸ was linked firmly with the medieval obsession with virginity. Bloch shows this phenomenon on several Old French poems, such as those written by the French poet Bernart de Ventadorn or William IX.

³⁵ R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*, 5.

³⁶ C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, 2.

³⁷ R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*, 94.

³⁸ R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*, 143.

The moment which was crucial for the emergence of love was when women were taken into consideration because of their wealth. In other words, they were important because they were heiresses. Through the optic of literature and poems, he states that courtly love is perhaps the best example of “tactics, which seek to elevate woman in order to debase her.”³⁹ The fear of women entering the public sphere and therefore being active in politics was present in medieval thoughts. As Bloch says “the fear of their playing a role in history has historically been associated with an elevation above the temporal that is synonymous with the very type of idealization of the feminine that courtliness represents.”⁴⁰

Another difference between Bloch and Lewis is that while Lewis says that idealism and cynicism about women came from the same source, which might be found in literature dealing with love⁴¹, Bloch states that courtliness and antifeminism are “in a dialectical rapport” and that women are “trapped in an ideological entanglement (on both sides of the spectrum of good and evil) whose ultimate effect is her abstraction from history.”⁴²

There are several historians, who do not agree with Bloch’s approach towards the problematics. Even Bloch is somehow apologetic in his preface stating that his work had been already taken as controversial before the actual publication.⁴³ It is his approach and the point of view he takes which raises questions. Jo Ann McNamara in her review for *The American Historical Review* reproaches Bloch for his partial anachronism in his argumentation. She also states that he “fails to see that there was another Christianity, woman's Christianity that provoked misogynistic reactions.”⁴⁴ This is an important aspect which also might have been a serious reason for an attack on women, a potential rival. She also states, that the romantic love is not a stage which helped to ensure deprivation of women, because the south of France failed to create restrictions for women. Those were created after the emergence of courtly love. She criticizes his method and says “that

³⁹ R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*, 197.

⁴⁰ R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*, 197.

⁴¹ C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, 56.

⁴² R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*, 164.

⁴³ R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*, 164.

⁴⁴ Jo Ann McNamara, review of *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*, by R. Howard Bloch, *The American Historical Review* 98 (1993): 146, accessed October 15, 2015, doi: 10.2307/2166407.

we must first acknowledge that it (misogyny) is the product of active and thinking men and then seek to understand the reality of woman's agency in dialectical relationship with man's reactive misogyny.”⁴⁵

2.3. Chivalric Romance as a Genre

Chivalric romances are different from purely epic romances, which deal with knighthood and purely masculine themes. Chanson de geste, an older French form of epic poems dating from the end of the 11th century and connected with Charlemagne and his circle of knights, is a fine example.⁴⁶ The purely masculine style is still present, however it is combined with courtly love. Love is an important element, not love towards one's lord, but love towards a woman, who's saving is preceded by several exploits.

The word itself, romance, came from an Old French expression “*metre en romanz*”, which means to translate into the vernacular French. Romances themselves were sometimes called “*contes*” (tales) and “*estoires*” (histories). The form of a romance can take several shapes. It was firstly written in verses, which demonstrated its origin in troubadours and love poetry, but it was created later in prose as well.⁴⁷

Chivalric romance as a genre is not united in its form and its content. There was a visible progress because “readers and writers may value continuity in a genre, resist change and demand that a winning formula be repeated; alternatively they may value variation, experimentation, and innovation.”⁴⁸ This phenomena therefore naturally helps to develop a new genre and modify the remaining one.

There is no question in what kind of society was connected with chivalric romances. Chivalric romances were about and for the “*crème de la crème*” of the society. It was meant for the circle of *bellatores*, those who fought and those who held the power. Therefore, as courtly love, it had to wait for its creation till the emergence of wealthy courts and culture of laymen.

⁴⁵ Jo Ann McNamara, review of *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*, 147.

⁴⁶ “Chanson de geste,” in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Chris Baldick, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 36.

⁴⁷ Roberta R. Krueger, “Introduction,” 1.

⁴⁸ Simon Gaunt, “Romance and other genres,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. Roberta R. Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 45.

Chivalric romances were connected with certain courts and their representatives, who were also beneficiaries of the poets and writers. The importance of beneficiaries is going to be discussed later, since it was partially a privilege held by women. Several dominant themes of chivalric romances occurred over the scope of time, in which they were popular. For example Arthurian romances or romances heavily influenced by ancient Greece and Rome were one of them. They may regionally vary according to taste and habits of different regions, such as in the case of this work *Matter of England*, a term which was coined by a medieval poet Jean Bodel. He came with the terms denoting the stories connected with antiquity, stories connected with Charlemagne and stories connected with King Arthur. That is *Matter of Rome*⁴⁹, *Matter of France*⁵⁰ and *Matter of England*⁵¹ respectively.

There are therefore romances, which are connected with the British Isles, not only thematically, but also because it mirrors the culture, folklore and habits found among their inhabitants. It might be argued that those values are francophone, since the ruling class was or better originated in France. French was the predominant language between the English noblemen of those times. Nonetheless, across England and France over 100 English and 200 French written romances survived. The shift from romances written in French to romances written in Middle English started to occur from the second half of the thirteenth century. This is connected with the expanding audience of the romances, where gentry and bourgeois readers take interest in this genre, as well as the uneasy relations between France and England.⁵²

French romances were predominantly influencing the chivalric romances in other cultural circles. Their main theme was not, nevertheless, always French. Such is the case of *Tristan and Isolde*, which was already present in oral tradition of England, since it was Cornwall, where the supposed lovers' story happened. The case of *Tristan and Isolde* as

⁴⁹ Robert T. Lambdin, "Matter of England," in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature*, eds. Lambdin, Robert T., and Laura C. Lambdin, (Abington: Routledge, 2000), 388.

⁵⁰ Robert T. Lambdin, "Matter of France," in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature*, eds. Lambdin, Robert T., and Laura C. Lambdin, (Abington: Routledge, 2000), 388-389.

⁵¹ Robert T. Lambdin, "Matter of Rome," in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature*, eds. Lambdin, Robert T., and Laura C. Lambdin, (Abington: Routledge, 2000), 389.

⁵² Roberta R. Krueger, "Introduction," 4.

well as King Arthur signalizes the interconnection between the French and English culture.

While the earliest romances were more fantastic than real, taking place in exotic or non-existent locations, a certain shift in the thirteen century emerged with the arrival of more realistic romances. The places took more realistic shape and the romances contained clever solutions to problems of everyday life, such as marriage and family.⁵³ This is connected with the emergence of a new group of people unusual for a medieval system, that is the inhabitants of the quickly growing towns. They did not fit into the feudal society of *bellatores*, *oratores* and *laboratores*, in other words those who fight, those who pray and those who work. They had become more prominent over a scope of decades and they were able to gather enough wealth to become patrons and political doers within the society.

There is an interesting question, whether the persona of the author should be discussed as well. In my opinion, it is irrelevant to question the personal profile of every author, since many of them remain anonymous. An interesting idea could be that some of them actually might have been women. What is nevertheless important and still connected with the author is the purpose of the romances, which is to be heard and recited in front of an audience. The storyteller is simultaneously a writing author and an inscribed narrator speaking directly to an audience of “readers.” Romances were therefore functioning also as a display of literary aesthetics and oral performance of the author.⁵⁴ The inspiration was vast, but the overall message must have been connected with the lives of the noblemen, because they were the patrons, who were paying the author.

Some members of the audience were the commissioners of the work. The position of them and their relationship towards the work is very interesting. Firstly, it was a symbol of status within the society. The stories were connected with them, with the reality or reversely the ideals they believed in. Chivalric romances were stories about them, or what could have happened.

In my opinion, two motives are hidden behind the commission. Luxury, as the meaning of the word tells, is something which is not common and not affordable for everyone. Was literature a luxurious convenience in the times which are discussed? I would say that it was, especially the literature of a secular character. The fear for one’s

⁵³ Roberta R. Krueger, “Introduction,” 5.

⁵⁴ Roberta R. Krueger, “Introduction,” 14.

soul is predominant in medieval times. It would be profitable to invest into a sacral piece of literature rather than chivalric romances. But then it was a declaration of one's wealth and they were not written for a momentary entertainment. Noblemen "commissioned the composition of romances in manuscripts that could be circulated among court and family members and could be passed along to children or to foreign courts."⁵⁵ This habit led to two things. By this expensive commission, they showed their status within the society but also, the chivalric romances led their own life in a new environment. There, they inspired commissions of new works with a similar story but bearing marks of the habits and ideals of their new placement. Therefore different versions of Tristan and Isolde, or various Arthurian stories exist.

The second interesting phenomenon towards the audience was political. This is a very important aspect in England. As it was already stated above, the houses of rulers in England were of a foreign origin. While William the Conqueror seized the power after the invasion in 1066, he had a difficult position. The invasion was successful, nevertheless he ruled the country which was not his by right. The country had predominantly Anglo-Saxon inhabitants. One of the means how to achieve dominance was to build a system of castles and fortresses, where the Norman noblemen were able to administrate the land. But since they became kings of one of the oldest kingdoms of Western Europe, they also needed a cultural validation of their power. They commenced rewriting the Anglo-Saxon history and started to put emphasis on different saints in their own new cathedrals. More importantly for our subject of study, they started to substitute the Anglo-Saxon literary production with their own, written in their vernacular language.⁵⁶

Benefactors were important and interesting from two aspects. One of the aspects was already discussed in the previous paragraph, but there is another important focus and that is the question of gender. A large number of benefactors were actually women. The most famous one is of course Eleanor of Aquitaine. But the habit of women being benefactors is older. Henry I, son of William the Conqueror, had two wives, none of them French since Matilda was of an Anglo-Saxon origin and Adela of Louvain was Flemish. Yet both of them commissioned translation and publications of different works written in French.⁵⁷ The women in the Norman dynasty had a very good relationship with the clergy. This

⁵⁵ Roberta R. Krueger, "Introduction," 3.

⁵⁶ Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women, A Social History of Women in England 450-1500*, 243.

⁵⁷ Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women, A Social History of Women in England 450-1500*, 244.

was visible not only in a political support but also in a production of literature. They appeared as patrons of several sacral works as well as history works.⁵⁸

It was not only a question of the royal house, but also of lower nobleman houses. They employed French clerks, who also served as teachers, to write works for them in French. Example of this phenomenon might be the patronage of Constantine FitzGilbert over the clerk Gaimar, who wrote *History of the English*.⁵⁹ It was Constance, who acquired a copy of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and let Gaimar to translate the Latin origin to Anglo-Norman.⁶⁰ Being a benefactor was one of the positions, where noblewomen could reach a certain status and importance. The tradition of the female role in literacy and books commenced in the Carolingian period and continued into the late Middle Ages.⁶¹

The end of the Middle Ages brings an end to several symbols, which were important for the noble families. The economy was severely damaged by wars. The most prominent was the Hundred Years War with France, which engaged the ruling class over several decades. Another catastrophe which affected all the classes was the plague. It did not have only an impact on the number of people living in Europe in general, but the severe drop in numbers influenced also the economic situation. There were no people in the country who would be able to produce enough money. The shift of power is visible on the role of the cities, which raised in importance. Medieval urbanisation brought new players into the game of power. They became the new and more prominent benefactors, which culminated with the introduction of the press. The new audience demanded new literary forms, which were closer to their hearth and nature. The world was broadening and the chivalric romances with its sentiments reduced its importance among the literary genres.

The last thing which should mention is one of the views of the contemporary critics. Literary historians have seen "romance as a mode that attempts to embellish social reality and escape from history, as one that explores the sacred mysteries of birth, death,

⁵⁸ Susan M. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power in the Twelfth-Century Anglo-Norman Realm* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 14.

⁵⁹ Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women, A Social History of Women in England 450-1500*, 244-245.

⁶⁰ Susan M. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power in the Twelfth-Century Anglo-Norman Realm*, 38.

⁶¹ Susan M. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power in the Twelfth-Century Anglo-Norman Realm*, 36.

and the quest for identity with secular optimism.”⁶² It might have worked as a protection of the elite society from the others. The genre of chivalric romances was purely fictional in comparison with a novel, which was more realistic.

⁶² Roberta R. Krueger, ‘Introduction,’ 6.

3. History of Medieval England

The historically traditional division of medieval times is not really applicable for the history of England. The beginning of the Medieval Ages is marked with the decline of the Roman Empire in the year of 476. That might have been an important turning point for England as well, since the Roman soldiers went to the heart of the imperium in order to save the falling empire and to stop the invasion of the barbaric groups. This vacuum lead into the emergence of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes, who created the first important period of English Medieval times. But the end of the Middle Ages, which is traditionally marked either by Columbus's voyage to the new world in 1492, or the Turks' invasion of Constantinople in 1453, is not applicable for England. Those are barely important dates for the English history. What, nevertheless, was important for the English history was the beginning of the War of Roses, which bore importance with an imminent change. Hence the death of Richard III in the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485 and the beginning of the Tudor's rule was more important than the discovery of the new world.

3.1. The Situation before the Arrival of the Plantagenets

The Anglo-Saxon England initiated several changes within the functioning of the society, which helped the Normans to establish the well-known feudal system. Namely it was the system of taxation and local administration.⁶³ It was not only Anglo-Saxons who helped the development of England, but also Vikings, who were skilful traders and who managed to install a Viking king on the throne of England, Cnut. Norman feudal system was better functioning than its French counterpart. The character of French system lead into undone system which created free knights, who were participants of the literary production of courtly love.⁶⁴

Pre-Norman inhabitants were interesting in the way how they co-existed with the incoming tribes. The Celtic population was driven into outer parts of England, such as Cornwall and Wales. Anglo-Saxon got accustomed to life on the isle and were able to accept the Christian religion in less than 100 years. Even the Vikings were able to co-exist on the isle with the Anglo-Saxon population, which is visible in the language

⁶³ Martin Whittock, *Life in the Middle Ages*, 3-5.

⁶⁴ George T. Beech, "Aquitaine," 105.

changes, and they had accepted Old English by the third generation.⁶⁵ The question of ethnicity is quite questionable in the Middle Ages in general. The idea of a nation is after all, a younger phenomenon which culminated in the nineteenth century. A more important aspect was their regional loyalties towards their place of settlement.

William the Conqueror's invasion is a moment in history which incessantly raises questions. The truth whether king Edward the Confessor promised or did not promise William English throne is nevertheless irrelevant. By that times, it had been actually *ealdormen*, *thegns* and important members of the clergy, who had held the power and who had the right to decide who was going to be the next king. Till then it had been a right of *witenagemot* or *thing*, an assembly remotely related to a parliament.⁶⁶ It is worth mentioning that by his expansive politics he created a dualism in the English royal title. Because of their possession of the duchy of Normandy, the kings of England were technically subjects of the French king.

William brought a dynasty which conveyed a new language that did not leave England for the following 300 years. He quickly established the means to overrun the new territory, such as the already briefly mentioned fortification system and the role of literature. He commenced the publication of *The Domesday Book* in the year 1085, which was a book which helped to collect the taxes. His sons, William II and Henry I, followed William's politics, trying to preserve the domains hold both in France and England.

The critical moment of the English history, which lead into a civil war and an accession of the Avengin kings happened during one evening preceded by a consumption of alcohol. It was 25th of November 1125, where the only male heir of the English throne William the Aetheling, died in the waters of the Channel. William was that night drinking with the future title holders of England, when the White Ship, the finest Norman ship, probably hit a rock, sunk and took the young and severely drunk noblemen with it. They were heavily intoxicated.⁶⁷ It was a huge stroke to the king Henry I, who lost his legitimate son and his only heiress became his daughter Matilda, who participated in a

⁶⁵ Martin Whittock, *Life in the Middle Ages*, 3-5.

⁶⁶ C. Warren Hollister, "Normandy, France and the Anglo-Norman Regnum," *Speculum* 51 (1976): 202-210, accessed October 20, 2015, doi: 10.2307/2854261.

⁶⁷ Dan Jones, *The Plantagenets* (London: William Collins, 2011), 5.

long civil war. The civil war broke after the death of Henry I, where two possible successors fought for power, Matilda and her cousin Stephen.

Matilda was a very strong woman, who fought with energy over the English throne. By marriage with Henry V, she became one of the most powerful women of then continental Europe, the empress of the Holy Roman Empire. After her husband's death in May 1125, seven months before the death of her brother William the Aetheling, she was called to Normandy, to her father. Henry I was able to arrange a marriage between her and younger Geoffrey Plantagenet in order to ensure the borders in Normandy.⁶⁸ Henry chose Matilda as his successor and he made the nobleman swear an oath, nevertheless after his death in 1135, the English Church with several noblemen supported her cousin, Stephen.⁶⁹ The civil war was a disaster for England. Stephen's reign was generally good, and he was able to manage his position despite Matilda and Geoffrey's attempts to overthrow him.

Matilda was not suitable because she was a woman, but her marriage with Geoffrey proved fruitful and she bore 3 sons. Stephens' sons, on the other hand, were not particularly popular and thus he was losing support in later periods of the civil war.⁷⁰ Stephen was a wise king, who knew that his descendants would not reign England, so in the summer of 1153 he and Matilda's son Henry, who became the main actor of the opposition, signed the Treaty of Winchester. The treaty stated Henry as Stephen's successor and adoptive son. Stephen remained the king, but he was forced to listen to Henry's advice. In return, Henry paid Stephen homage. This treaty was generally accepted and after Stephen's death in 1154 and 19 years of civil war Henry took the throne and started the long and prosperous reign of the Plantagenets.

3.2. The Plantagenets' Empire

Henry II was crowned at Westminster Abbey on 19th of December 1154 in presence of his expecting wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine. He initiated a series of changes

⁶⁸ Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075- 1225* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 10.

⁶⁹ Dan Jones, *The Plantagenets*, 15-16.

⁷⁰ Dan Jones, *The Plantagenets*, 38-40.

not only in England, but in his other domains, Normandy, Brittany, Maine, Anjou, Touraine, Blois, and Aquitaine as well.

He had to deal with England first, because it was in a desolate state after the war. He confiscated all the titles and property given by King Stephen during his reign. Some of the titles went back to the same noblemen he took them from, but some were given to his supporters.⁷¹ By that he had shown who the lord in the country is. All the castles built illegally were destroyed. He commenced construction of several new fortification complexes, Dover among them.

Henry also changed the law in England, which was highly ineffective. Norman rule had worked on the bases of local courts and jurisdictions, but the Assize of Clarendon in 1166 assured two novel aspects. Firstly, it was the crown with royal sheriffs and justices who were the authorities of law. Secondary, the outdated trial by ordeal or by battle was replaced by the importance of evidence, inspection, and laymen and freemen's testimony under an oath was taken into consideration.⁷²

There were two cases of political turmoil, both of them probably unexpected by Henry. One of them was a well famous case of Thomas Beckett. The second turmoil came from his own family. Henry II was admirably a long ruling monarch with his 35 years on the throne. To start with, it brought a needed stability after the civil war, but his male issue, four sons became impatient, because Henry did not let them to co-rule with him. It was their mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, who supported them widely. The Great Revolt of the years 1173–74 left Henry without the support of his sons. Henry, Richard, and Geoffrey flew to France. Henry became a powerful player, and France, Scotland and other minor political formations stood against him. Revolts broke in Angoulême, Brittany, England, Maine, and Poitou. Henry was nevertheless popular in the cities of England, and he held important fortresses and ports in other places. He won and politically survived this huge revolt. It was, nevertheless, a waking call, which led into a bigger participation of his sons in the questions connected with ruling.⁷³ Eleanor was kept under a house arrest and went public only during important festivals, such as Christmas.⁷⁴ The Scottish king had to give homage to Henry and had to give up 5 important castles. The peace between

⁷¹ Dan Jones, *The Plantagenets*, 47.

⁷² Dan Jones, *The Plantagenets*, 96.

⁷³ Dan Jones, *The Plantagenets*, 71-81.

⁷⁴ Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075- 1225*, 55.

the father and his sons became fragile again later. His successor Henry, who lived a lavished life, needed more money in order to support his expensive way of life. The growing crises was stopped by an unexpected death of the young future king, who died in 1183.

Richard was then probably assigned as the next king of England, but he had to give up Aquitaine to John, his youngest brother. His other remaining brother, Geoffrey, the duke of Brittany by marriage, died on a tournament in Paris, which left Henry with only two sons. Richard, an eager crusader in waiting, did not agree with Henry and his meagre approach towards him. He demanded money so he could go on a crusade with a new French King, Philip Augustus, who was waiting for Richard. Richard again betrayed his father and did homage to Philip Augustus, hastily not thinking about the seriousness of his deed. Henry was tired and at the end agreed to all Richard's demands. Henry's death in 1189 was accelerated by John's betrayal, who decided to support his brother in the family dispute.⁷⁵

Richard, who is the only king having a statue in the area of the Parliament, did not spent a lot of time in England. He financially exhausted England because of his expensive crusading and adventures. He was not a good king, and his brother's agnomen, Lackland, was partly also his doing.⁷⁶ What Henry II fought for and created was destroyed by his two sons. Richard sold what he could and he was supposed to proclaim that he would have sold London if he could find a buyer.⁷⁷ Richard went on a crusade, conquering Cyprus, which lead into cooling relationship towards Philip Augustus. He married Berengaria of Navarre, a daughter of King Sancho VI of Navarre, with a great pomp. The marriage was affectionate, nevertheless by Richard's knightly zeal filled with traveling remained childless. His crusading in the Holy Land was not successful according to Richard's wishes, but he signed a treaty with Saladin, which allowed Christians to access Jerusalem. Due to bad weather, Richard was made to take a dangerous route through central Europe, where he was caught by Leopold V, the Duke of Austria, who accused Richard of the death of his cousin. Leopold imprisoned Richard and then he sent him to Henry VI, Holy Roman Emperor. While Richard was away, Eleanor of Aquitaine was

⁷⁵ Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075- 1225*, 7.

⁷⁶ Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075- 1225*, 8-9.

⁷⁷ Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075- 1225*, 119.

trying to gather enough money to save her favourite son. After two years in prison, Richard's ransom was paid and Richard was set free in 1194.⁷⁸

John, who became an active opponent to Richard, reconciled with his long absent brother, who started to concentrate on the falling empire. He started to reconquer the lost French domains and his former friend, Philip, became his enemy. He continued with overdrawing the treasury by building several castles, among them Château Gaillard in Normandy. His operations on the continent became fatal, when his wound became gangrenous. He died in 1199, leaving the dying empire to his brother.

What is interesting on Richard's persona is the whole aura of a warrior around him. Steven Runciman, one of the biggest specialist on crusades, wrote that "he was a bad son, a bad husband, and a bad king, but a gallant and splendid soldier."⁷⁹ Of course that he had not only positive but also negative reception during his times, because of his heavy taxations. Medieval imaginary took Richard very positively, he was a knight who was fighting in the name of god, which was one of the most positive images he could have, next to saints. He was supposed to reveal his place of imprisonment with the help of his minstrel Blondel, whose song he recognised. The story is more than probably fictional, but it already emerged during the first half of the 13th century, less than 50 years after his death.⁸⁰ He became an embodiment of a glorious king and knight even though his actual reign left England poor and at the verge of death.

John's position was hardly worth envy and it was only a question of time when he loses most of the Plantagenet's domains. Le Goulet Peace of 1200, a treaty which he signed with Philip II Augustus, led to a temporary period or calm, where the French King accepted John's position as a rightful heir to his French domains. Nevertheless already married John decided to marry a younger heiress, Isabella of Angoulême, by which he would make the route to Aquitaine easier. He decided to leave his first wife on pretence of not acquiring a papal dispense for a marriage of family relatives and he married Isabella who was already promised to Hugh of Lusignan. His behaviour had far-reaching consequences, which lead into the loss of most of his lands. Hugh decided to bring the cause in front of the French King. The king took all the French domains from John, giving

⁷⁸ Robert Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075- 1225*, 25.

⁷⁹ Steven Runciman, *History of the Crusades, Vol. III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 75.

⁸⁰ Jean Flori, *Richard the Lionheart: Knight and King*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 191–192.

most of it to Arthur I of Normandy, son of John's brother Geoffrey who died in a tournament in Paris. The King kept Normandy as his own. By the end his reign, the only domain owned by John was his mother's Aquitaine.

Regarding his rule in England, John was not a bad king, since he inherited a well working legal system. Unlike Richard, John was an English king spending a large amount of time in England. Nevertheless his popularity decreased due to famine and bad agricultural environment and also by the lack of piety and his debauched life. Being excommunicated by the pope did not help him either. As a king he concentrated on regaining Normandy. He was supported by William Marshal, 1st Earl of Pembroke, who was the embodiment of knighthood. The battlefield of Bouvines in 1214 meant the end of hopes of regaining Normandy back. The French king won over the German and English, and John had to return back to England.⁸¹

The deteriorating situation of John led into one of the most celebrated parchment of English history, which is the *Magna Carta Libertatum* of 1215. After his defeat on French soil another one was awaiting him at home. The gentry and laymen from the north and south of England had started plotting a resistance. The Magna Charta did adjust the position of free men towards their king, as well as taxation and the law. It was an agreement and large number of concessions had to be made on John's side.⁸² He did object to all the demands and the war with barons broke out. John did not see the outcome of the war, because he suffered from dysentery which was fatal. He died in 1216.

William Marshal became a protector on behalf of John's young son, Henry III. William revived *Magna Charta*, which led into its acceptance. Henry's rule was affected by his pious behavior, which led into a vast reconstruction of Westminster. Because of his young age, his rule was actually rule of his chancellors. The war with barons inherited after his father was to win. Henry was able to defeat them, nevertheless by the Great Charter of 1225, he declared the protection of the rights of barons.⁸³ As his father, even Henry was concerned with the loss of French domains. Nevertheless he did not succeed, only Gascony was successfully taken back. Henry was the most English king of all his

⁸¹ Robert Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075- 1225*, 24.

⁸² Geoffrey Hindley, *The Magna Carta, The Story of the Origins of Liberty*, (London: Robinson, 2008), 80-97.

⁸³ J. C. Holt, "The Barons and the Great Charter," *The English Historical Review* 70 (1955): 2, accessed October 20, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/556898>.

predecessors since he truly did rule over England personally. This was also given by the size of his empire. England became the centre of the Angevin Empire. With the Treaty of Paris in 1259, Henry did homage to Louis IX for Gascony and gave up his claims to Normandy, Anjou, and Poitou.⁸⁴

The second war with barons was led by a powerful figure of Simon de Montfort. They demanded that important government functions should be held by English laymen. Ironically, Simon was of a French origin. He was nevertheless a powerful nobleman, whose death ensured the political peace in England. Henry regained his royal position and the rest of his rule was relatively calm.

His son, Edward I called "Longshanks" because of his remarkable height, was on a crusade when he heard that his father had passed away. He took a long route to home, stopping by in Gascony and paying homage to the French King. He reigned England from the year of 1272 but it was not till 1274 he came to the isle.⁸⁵ His main aim was a reformation of the legal system in England, but he did not codify the English law. Among historians, he is well known as the conqueror of Wales, which independence was crushed after the series of wars in 1282 and 1283. His relationship towards Scotland was quite peaceful but after the death of Alexander III, he had a plan to connect Scotland by marriage, which was thwarted by the death of Alexander's only heir, his granddaughter. He decided in favour of John Balliol, who became the new king of Scotland.⁸⁶ It is true that Edward's excessive campaigns to Wales exhausted the treasury, which became a bitter inheritance to his son, Edward II.

Edward II became the king in 1307. The political relations among the French and English became stressful and therefore Edward married Isabella of France, a daughter of the French king Phillip IV. Even though he had several offspring, historians question his relationship towards men.⁸⁷ His close relationship with Piers Gaveston raised several concerns, which was multiplied by Gaveston's arrogance. The powerful barons made the king to exile him, which shows the power of the laymen. Edward had to succumb and he

⁸⁴ P. Chaplais, "The Making of the Treaty of Paris (1259) and the Royal Style," *The English Historical Review* 67 (1952): 236, accessed October 20, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/555226>.

⁸⁵ Dan Jones, *The Plantagenets*, 293-294.

⁸⁶ Dan Jones, *The Plantagenets*, 327.

⁸⁷ See W.M. Ormrod, "Sexuality of Edward II," in *The Reign of Edward II, New Perspectives*, eds. Dodd, Gwilym, and Anthony Musson, (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2006), 22-47.

published a reformation bill the Ordinances of 1311, which gave the noblemen more power. In the end, Gaveston was executed by Edward's cousin, the Earl of Lancaster. Edward was not a successful king, being also defeated by the Scottish. He was trying to defeat the noblemen who did not agree with his politics. He confronted his barons and executed his cousin, seizing the power with his new favourite, Hugh Despenser. Edward's behaviour worsened the relation with the French, which was at first saved by his French wife. Nevertheless, Isabella became a powerful enemy to her husband, when she took the young heir with her to France, and along with her lover, Roger Mortimer. They invaded England and Edward was captured. He was pushed into a relinquishment of his crown in the year 1327 in favour of his son, Edward III, and in the same year passes away. The historians argue whether it was a murder or not.⁸⁸

Edward III had a difficult start to his carrier at which end stood a powerful monarch with 50 years of expertise. It could be said that he was a total opposite to his father. Firstly he had to defend his position against his mother and her lover, Roger Mortimer.⁸⁹ Edward was a pragmatic ruler who listened to his magnates. He knew that he should focus on a welfare together with them in order to unite to them. He partly succeeded in Scotland, where he reinstated the king Edward Balliol on the throne, nevertheless the later development was a let-down since David II gained more support.⁹⁰

Edward's rule was affected by the wave of the Black Death which rolled over England and deprived England of one third of its population. The economic situation was not ideal, because as it was stated before, the reduced population was not able to produce enough income, which could support Edward's military campaigns. The sources do not indicate that economy was in a crisis, but it stroke trade and the merchants.⁹¹ The subjects became aware of the lack of workers and demanded higher wages. They knew that there was not enough people to work and they could have asked for more money. Therefore Edward commissioned an ordinance to restore pre-plague wages which was followed by

⁸⁸ Ian Mortimer, "The Death of Edward II in Berkeley Castle," *The English Historical Review* 120 (2006): 1177, accessed October 20, 2015, doi:10. 1093/ehr/cei.

⁸⁹ Michael Prestwich, *Plantagenet England 1225–1360* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 42.

⁹⁰ Dan Jones, *The Plantagenets*, 445-447.

⁹¹ John Gillingham and Ralph A. Griffiths, *The Oxford history of Britain, Vol. II, The Middle Ages*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 96.

a parliamentary statute in 1351. This prevented the mobility of workers as well as their ridiculous claims.⁹²

Edward's mother was, as it was mentioned before, a daughter of the French king. Therefore he had a rightful claim, slightly portentous, to the French throne. He declared the claim in 1377. During Edward's reign, England got use to its sovereign position in the Avegnian empire and his grandiose plans to conquer France caused fears among the English barons. They were afraid that England would lose its importance.⁹³ Edward started the Hundred Years' War. The beginning of the war was very successful, especially the victory at Poitiers, where the Black Prince, son of Edward III, captured the French King John II. This led into a signing of the Treaty of Brétigny in 1360, which stated that Aquitaine, Ponthieu and Calais belongs to the English. His concentration on the war against France led into the negligence of his ruler's duties in England.

In the last ten years of his reign, Edward lost his vigour. He started to rely on his sons and political advisers. His younger son John of Gaunt led the political campaign against France. He became ill and John of Gaunt became factually the only active member of the royal family who was in charge,⁹⁴ since his brother, the Black Prince, was severely ill as well. Edward passed away in 1377 leaving the kingdom to his grandson Richard II, son of the Black Prince, who died in the previous year.

What is interesting on the persona of Edward III from our point of view, is his relationship towards the cult of a warrior and chivalric romances. He has created a nation filled with his close companions from the group of noblemen. He was obsessed with chivalric romances and the cult of warriors, especially with the character of King Arthur and The Rounded Table. He did not revive the company of the Rounded Table, but he did establish a new order, the Order of the Garter.⁹⁵ Edward's campaigns against the French also caused the revitalization of the English language, which was logical, since French was, after all, the language of the enemy.

The chivalric romances chosen for this thesis were written before the rule of the king Richard II, therefore it would be contra-productive to summarize his rule as well. He was nevertheless in a very difficult position. Young and controlled, he was not an

⁹² Michael Prestwich, *Plantagenet England 1225–1360*, 282.

⁹³ Michael Prestwich, *Plantagenet England 1225–1360*, 426-428.

⁹⁴ Dan Jones, *The Plantagenets*, 510-511.

⁹⁵ Nigel Saul, *Chivalry in Medieval England*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 102.

ideal ruler of the medieval empire. His interests laid more in culture and lavish luxury than on a battlefield.⁹⁶ Nevertheless his marriage to Ann of Bohemia, the daughter of Charles IV, proved to be important for the Czech lands, because the ideas of John Wycliffe enriched the ideas of Czech thinkers, which led to the Hussite movement.

3.3. The Position and Role of Women in Plantagenets' England

“A horse, whether good or bad, needs a spur; a woman, whether good or bad, needs a lord and master, and sometimes a stick.”⁹⁷

Florentine proverb

This old Florentine proverb from the fourteenth century shows the position of women in the traditional medieval society. They were supposed to be obedient towards their masters, who were supposed to control them. Women were observed through relationships they held with men. They were either virgins, wives or widows. All three statuses are describable in the connection with men. As a virgin, she belonged to her father or guardian, who was responsible for her sustainability until her wedding. As a wife, a woman is her husband's property. Husband is in charge of her and he is responsible for her behaviour and reputation. As a noble widow, a woman could have reached a certain freedom if rich, but if she was a wealthy heiress, the king would use her to his advantage. He could marry her to whomever he would find fitting.⁹⁸

The question of gender is quite problematic in the medieval period. Several aspects have to be taken into consideration. One of them is what kind of sources are left to our study. Who were the authors and what was their character is crucial, as it was shown in the case of Maribor and his misogynic text. It can be hardly expected that many of them would be written on the position of lower born women. It is not impossible to

⁹⁶ George B. Stow, “Richard II and the Invention of the Pocket Handkerchief,” *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 27 (1995): 221, accessed October 25, 2015, doi: 10.2307/4051526.

⁹⁷ Christiane Klapish-Zuber, “Enforcing Order,” in *A History of Women in the West, II. Silences of the Middle Ages*, ed. Christiane Klapish-Zuber (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 13.

⁹⁸ Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women, A Social History of Women in England 450-1500*, 167.

reconstruct the position of lower born women, but it is problematic. Archaeology and municipal books, as well as letters and other sources of a personal character, could help to recreate the position and sphere of women.

The women discussed in this thesis are women of high status. Those are visible in the sources more than their poor counterparts. Laws could be also helpful in order to discover freedom and possibilities women had. Very rarely commentaries of women themselves, such as later observations of Christiane de Pisan, Christina de Markytae and Margery Kempe, survived.

The women represented in the chivalric romances chosen for the analysis became queens. Those women are Blanche of Castile, a partial orphan of a French knight kept in a court of a Spanish king, Isabella of France, an heiress to the English throne, and a nameless princess, the daughter of the King of Tars. Queens were in the centre of attention, never alone and always bound by the codes of behaviour. It is ironical that courtly love came to England partly through Eleanor of Aquitaine, who was not an ideal Queen. If an ideal of a woman and a queen would be reconstructed, she would function as the opposite. She was an adventurer, who knew her price. She was used to luxury and she held an excessive court, which was known for its cultural character. She was a benefactor of several poets, who would praise her, and by that, she created an epicentre of courtly love.⁹⁹ But another question remains. Was she a good wife? Queen and wife of two kings, French and English, she became a well known person. She divorced the French king because of the missing papal dispense needed for a marriage between two relatives.¹⁰⁰ For Henry, she was not an obedient wife, opposing her husbands and clearly supporting her rebellious sons. By her opposition, she was not a good queen. Her behaviour led to her imprisonment, where she had to wait until Henry II's death to become active again.¹⁰¹

The cornerstone of the society was a marriage of two heterosexuals, who were able to produce children. The journey, which a highly born girl must take in order to become a wife, will discover the position of women in the society.

As it will be mentioned in the analysis of romances, a birth of a son was welcomed more than that of the girl. The reason behind this practise was pragmatic. Male-centred

⁹⁹ Alison Wier, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, (London: Vintage, 2007), 181-182.

¹⁰⁰ Constance B. Bouchard, "Consanguinity and Noble Marriages in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," 271.

¹⁰¹ Alison Wier, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 261.

society gave more space to men than women. That is, they were powerful enough to take care of their parents and to assure their position within the society. The practise was that only the firstborn son was forced into a marriage with a rich heiress and the rest of the male offspring had to take care of themselves, either finding a place in a clergy or gain his own land through a homage of a different lord.¹⁰² The girls, on the other hand, were thieves, who would take the father's fortune, either money or a domain, which would be lost in order to get rid of her. She might bring a political alliance but the political situation might change and the advantage gained by her marriage would disappear. It was generally accepted that medieval times did not cherish the love between the children and parents but this thesis is long forgotten.¹⁰³ Even girls brought delight into their parents' life, such as visible in a French poem written by a father after the birth of his daughter. This might be applicable even for the studied period in England, since the customs were generally similar. The poem is finished with a stanza, which shows the relationship between the father and the girl:

Grow then, little girl, the future support of your father in
His querulous old age, when his eyes will dim;
As the diligent servant of my mind you will do more
Than a son.¹⁰⁴

According to Isidore of Seville, whose opinion was accepted during the Middle Ages, children were sorted into three categories. They were infants until the age of seven, then children until the age of fourteen and youth until the age of twenty-eight.¹⁰⁵ In case of education, children were supposed to follow their parents' example. Women could gain their education at home, or they could have been sent into a convent. It is not clear whether the mothers taught their children to read and whether it was common, but at least episodically it did happen.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Paulette L'Hermite-Leclercq, "The Feudal Order," in *A History of Women in the West, II. Silences of the Middle Ages*, ed. Christiane Klapish-Zuber, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 210.

¹⁰³ Paulette L'Hermite-Leclercq, "The Feudal Order," 207.

¹⁰⁴ Walter of Châtillon, *Reaction to the Birth of a Daughter*, in *Medieval Writings on Secular Women*, trans. Skinner, Patricia, and Elisabeth van Houts, (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 32.

¹⁰⁵ Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women, A Social History of Women in England 450-1500*, 133.

¹⁰⁶ Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women, A Social History of Women in England 450-1500*, 138.

Blancheflour and Goldeboru, the main heroines of the two of our chosen romances were said to be educated. It was not uncommon for women to have a certain knowledge. Queens were present during some political discussions, because their signatures appeared on different types of documents. It cannot be said with certainty, whether they were present while those documents were written, or whether they only signed them.¹⁰⁷

The position of the Queen was very important, she held the court and she was supposed to create a link between the king and the Church as well. As it was stated above, they were benefactors of artists and they functioned as council to their husbands and also sons, as it is visible in the relationship of Matilde and her son Henry II, when he was caught in the affair with Thomas Beckett.¹⁰⁸

The question of virginity is important as well. The virginity assured the purity of the lineage. It was the father's or a guardian's responsibility to guard a girl's virginity until her wedding night. Then she becomes her husband's property. The question who to marry was disputable and it depended on several aspects. It was the parents' job to choose the right husband for their daughter. The Church stated, that marriage is an agreement closed by both sides with a consent of the husband and wife to be.¹⁰⁹ The reality was different for the girls. In reality, their only choice was to succumb the parents' wish to marry whomever they chose.¹¹⁰ The political situation determined who was a suitable husband or not. Eleanor of Castille's husband Edward I was her second possible fiancée, which her parents had in mind. But since they claimed Aquitaine as their own, Edward married her with agreement that they would transfer their claim to him. English

¹⁰⁷ Suzanne Fonay Wemple, "Women from the Fifth to the Tenth Century," in *A History of Women in the West, II. Silences of the Middle Ages*, ed. Christiane Klapish-Zuber, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 197-201.

¹⁰⁸ See Prior Nicolas of Mont-aux-Malades, "Letter to Thomas Becket," in *Medieval Writings on Secular Women* Skinner, trans. Skinner, Patricia, and Elisabeth van Houts, (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 243-246.

¹⁰⁹ Paulette L'Hermite-Leclercq, "The Feudal Order," 215.

¹¹⁰ Claudia Opitz, "Life in the Late Middle Ages," in *A History of Women in the West, II. Silences of the Middle Ages*, ed. Christiane Klapish-Zuber, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 273.

Dominican John Bromyard with his antimatrimonial opinions said that whether a girl was ugly or beautiful, fertile or sterile, a wife spelled trouble.¹¹¹

The relationship between a wife and a husband is unequal. Marriage is a sacred relationship which should produce offspring sinfully. The wife should be the husband's consort. She should follow her husband anywhere he wishes to have her. She should blindly love him and accept him if he follows the true religion. Because if he sins, she should correct his mistakes. She should be faithful to her husband as well, because she is his servant. The same blind love is not expected from men. The husband's duties towards his wife were support, instruction, and correction.¹¹² A wife must have accepted her husband's correction and reproach gracefully and fondly, because it was a sign of love.¹¹³ A husband could beat his wife freely, the only borderline was bloodshed and broken bones, where women could file a complaint.¹¹⁴ This relationship between the spouses was based on a generally believed natural inferiority as well as it was strengthening the already subsidiary position within the society. The husband's infidelity was also a wife's mistake, because if she would be a true and proper wife, her husband would not be seeking a fulfilment of his needs somewhere else.¹¹⁵

The marriage was not to be broken. There were of course examples, where marriages were dissolved. Even the royal ones, but it was not an everyday habit. King John dissolved his first marriage when he fell in love with a younger woman. He remembered that his wife Isabella was his half-second cousin and therefore within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity. Ironically, he had already a disagreement with the Church when he married his first wife because of the same reason. The pope let him to stay with her but forbid them to consummate their marriage.¹¹⁶ Even his mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, did leave her first husband, which was already stated above. It was

¹¹¹ Silvana Vecchio, "The Good Wife," in *A History of Women in the West, II. Silences of the Middle Ages*, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 117.

¹¹² Silvana Vecchio, "The Good Wife," 119.

¹¹³ Silvana Vecchio, "The Good Wife," 120.

¹¹⁴ Eve Salisbury, "Domestic Abuse," in *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe, An Encyclopedia*, ed. Margaret Schaus, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 220.

¹¹⁵ Claudia Opitz, "Life in the Late Middle Ages," 277-278.

¹¹⁶ Paulette L'Hermite-Leclercq, "The Feudal Order," 209.

rumoured that one of the royal spouses was impotent, but she proven to be fertile in her second marriage.¹¹⁷

There is an interesting story of a young woman, who left her husband in the late twelve century in Oxford. She was a daughter of a burgher who was forced into a marriage with a young man. Nevertheless, she fell in love with another and left her husband. The clerics took an interest and tried to convince her to come back to her husband. They brought her to Church where she was expected by the husband and the bishop. The bishop commanded the girl to give her husband a kiss of peace, which would unite them and she would purify herself. But when her poor husband approached her, she “shamelessly spat at him in the face, even though he was near the altar in the presence not only of many most reverend men but also of the bishop.”¹¹⁸ She was excommunicated but she probably did not care, because she left her husband anyway.

What is the difference between the Oxford girl’s behaviour and the behaviour of a royal? A royal person represents the whole kingdom, he is the head and the country is his body. If he would do something similar as the Oxford girl, the Church would excommunicate him. That would lead into the unbinding of his laymen from the feudal relationship, because the pope would marked him as an unworthy person. Another punishment would be an interdiction, which would stop ceremonies in the whole country. The clergy would not be able to perform any rituals, that is, no funerals and no weddings. Thus the Church worked as a policeman, showing its superiority. Consequently, while there was only the girl’s soul at stake, the ruler is responsible for the whole country.

The royal couple was supposed to be the display of ideals, the queens were supposed to be obedient and gracious ladies, who held a court filled up with music, poetry and laughter. They were supposed to be pious as the nameless princess from the romance *The King of Tars*, healthily proud as Goldeboru from *Havelok the Dane* and educated and subordinate as Blancheflour.

¹¹⁷Alison Wier, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 76.

¹¹⁸ “A Young Woman Excommunicated for Leaving her Husband” in *Medieval Writings on Secular Women*, trans. Skinner, Patricia, and Elisabeth van Houts, (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 165-167.

4. Chosen Chivalric Romances

As I have stated in the introduction, I have chosen three romances representing three different women with different approaches and roles within the story. The analysis will be focused on *Floris and Blancheflour*, *Havelok the Dane*, and *The King of Tars*.¹¹⁹ Blancheflour is a girl who is a damsel in distress waiting to be saved by her lover. The second studied character is a royal heiress, Goldeboru, who becomes a wife of a future king of England and Denmark, Havelok. The last chosen chivalric romance contains an active princess of Tars, who has to fight for her own rescue alone with the help of Christianity. All the women, which are going to be discussed in this part, become members of a royal line. The focus will be placed on their role within the story with the comparison in the real world.

4.1. Floris and Blancheflour

The children lovyd togeder soo,
They myght never parte atwoo.¹²⁰

Floris and Banchefflour is in many ways a traditional chivalric romance. It was a popular romance which survived in several versions and languages. The original story was written in Old French during the period when Chrétien de Troyes started to write his chivalric romances, circa in the scope of the years 1160-70.¹²¹ It is a copybook example of a romance of the French origin, which influenced with its popularity various versions across the medieval west, as it was already stated in a section concerned with the genre.

¹¹⁹ Authors of all three romances remain anonymous and therefore I will use the names of editors of online editions I have acquired in the footnotes instead.

¹²⁰ Eric Kooper, ed., “Floris and Blancheflour” in *Sentimental and Humorous Romances*, ed. Eric Kooper, (Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005), accessed October 25, 2015, <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/kooper-sentimental-and-humorous-romances-floris-and-blancheflour>.

¹²¹Eric Kooper, ed., “Floris and Blancheflour: Introduction,” in *Sentimental and Humorous Romances*, ed. Eric Kooper, (Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005), accessed October 25, 2015, <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/kooper-sentimental-and-humorous-romances-floris-and-blancheflour>.

The English version is dated around the year 1250, but it is hard to determine the exact date.¹²² It is the second oldest romance written in English after *The King Horn*. Exactly 4 manuscripts of the romance survived, with the oldest manuscript being dated to 1330 in the Cambridge University Library, which is MS Gg.iv.27.2. Fols. 1r-5v. The youngest one, MS Cotton Vitellius D.iii. Fols. 6r-8v., is dated in a late 14th century stored in the British Library in London. All of the four manuscripts are missing the beginning of the story. All of them are similar, nevertheless their structure and style eliminates the possibility of the older manuscripts being adapted by the younger ones.

The manuscript used for this particular analysis is the manuscript MS Gg.iv.27.2. Fols. 1r-5v, used by Eric Kooper.

4.1.1. Summary

The story's setting is in Spain, where the Queen of Spain gives birth to a son, who they name Floris. Within the court there happens to be a captured Christian noblewoman who delivers a daughter on the precisely same day as the queen. The girl is given the name of Blancheflour. Because of Floris' wish, Blancheflour is given the same education as the heir. While they are growing up together, they fall in love. The King of Spain does not like the idea of their marriage and therefore decides that the best idea to end their relationship is to kill the young girl. The queen persuades him to send Floris away instead, since the distance would calm down their reciprocal feelings. It is not enough, so instead of killing her, they decide to sell Blancheflour to merchants. Merchants give the king gold and an expensive cup once owned by Aeneas and decorated with Paris and Helen of Troy in return.

When Floris comes back, he finds a tomb, which is supposed to contain the body of Blancheflour. When his mother sees that he desires to take his life because of the sorrow he feels, she divulges the girl's lot. Even his father agrees to Floris marrying Blancheflour since they had already lost twelve children and they should not lose their last one. Floris commences on a journey with the cup and a magical ring, which can protect its bearer. He later discovers that the merchants sold Blancheflour to the emir in Babylon so he decides to follow her.

After he arrives in Babylon, he discovers that Blancheflour is held in the emir's harem, in a tower which is insurmountable to reach. He befriends Daris, a man he stays

¹²² Eric Kooper, ed., "Floris and Blancheflour: Introduction."

with. Another obstacle lying between him and his love is a magical garden which serves as a place, where the emir chooses his wives with the help of magic. According to Daris's advice, he befriends a porter at the tower. The porter smuggles Floris into the castle in a basket, which by accident ends in a room of Claris, Blancheffour's friend. She realizes that it is Floris, her friend's love. Claris sends for Blancheffour.

The united lovers spend several nights together, which leads to their disclosure. The emir wants to kill them but he decides to listen to his barons' opinions as well. The lovers are sentenced to be burned alive. Both of them refuse to wear the magical ring, which would protect them, because they are not able to live without each other. The king changes his mind and wants to behead them, leaving the lovers to argue who should die first. The emir decides that if Floris reveals who helped him into the tower, he will save their life. Floris refuses, however he directly afterwards tells the whole story, mentioning the porter being his helper. The emir decides to bestow a kingdom on Floris and lets him have Blancheffour. He invites him to live in the court with him. The emir takes them into the church, where they are wed and he sends for Claris, who becomes his queen. Floris discovers that his father had died and commences on the journey to Spain with Blancheffour, where they become king and queen.

4.1.2. Damsel in Distress Called Blancheffour

The story of *Floris and Blancheffour* shows several interesting features which chivalric romances possess. The illogicality of the romance is slightly astounding for a modern reader, but I do not think that medieval listeners were concerned with the factual mistakes. By the time of the romance, Spain as such should have been Islamic, which is not clearly stated. The only Christians mentioned in the story are Blancheffour and her mother. Nevertheless, according to Hubert's translation of Fonds Français MS 1447, Floris' father was supposed to be a pagan king, Fenix, capturing the pregnant woman on her way to Santiago de Compostella.¹²³ Likewise it is slightly surprising that the wedding at the end of the story happens to be in a church in Babylon, in the presence of the emir, who had to be a Muslim. This is apparent not only because of his title but also because of the habit of keeping a harem and probably several wives.

¹²³ Eric Kooper, ed., "Floris and Blancheffour: Introduction."

What is nevertheless remarkable at the beginning of the romance, is Floris' eagerness towards Blancheflour's education. He answers to his father's wishes about education as such:

"Ne shal not Blancheflour lerne with me?	But
Ne can y noght to scole goon	I cannot
Without Blaunchefloure," he seide than.	"Ne can y in
no scole syng ne rede	nor; read without Blauncheflour,"
he seide.	
The king seide to his soon:	son
"She shal lerne for thy love." ¹²⁴	

Therefore Floris' love acquires Blancheflour an education, which would not be accessible in her position. If she was a daughter of a captured woman, she would stay illiterate. She is given a sovereign position next to the heir of Spain, being his companion. It is later said, that they both learned Latin and writing together, with no difficulties. This is the first and last time when her knowledge is mentioned, since it is not used to her benefits during the perils she went through.

Blancheflour is not a free person in the court nevertheless. When the parents decide against the marriage, she is sold to a group of merchants without hesitation. Her position is also shown in the position of her mother, the good Christian widow. When Floris comes back from the educational journey, he cannot believe that his love died. He asks about Blancheflour her mother, who replies "Sir, deed." ¹²⁵ Her mother has a non-active role within the story. She emerges in this individual moment, but she has no authority regarding her daughter's position.

Blancheflour's only quality seems to be Floris' love towards her. It is the love which puts the story forward. When Blancheflour sets out on the journey to Babylon, Floris, who is coming after her, copies her behaviour. He sat and wept, exactly where Blancheflour did the same, several days ago.¹²⁶ This enhances the bond, which the lovers have among each other.

¹²⁴ Eric Kooper, ed., "Floris and Blancheflour."

¹²⁵ Eric Kooper, ed., "Floris and Blancheflour."

¹²⁶ Eric Kooper, ed., "Floris and Blancheflour."

She is a fair lady, worth conquering, because the emir falls in love with her when she stands still with her head risen in the market. There she was being sold, accepting her destiny with a certain pride. It is generally accepted, that Blanche flour will pass the trials in the magical garden. The garden functions as a sorting place for emir's future wives. There is a magical stream flowing from the paradise, which can show whether the chosen girl is or is not worth the emir. The stream starts to scream and turns red when an unchaste girl cleans herself in its water. If a girl would prove guilty, that she is not being a virgin, she would be immediately put to death. Nobody questions Blanche flour's chastity. The next trial is the Tree of Love, which grows within the garden. A falling blossom of the tree chooses the rightful winner and emir's future wife.

When Floris finally meets her in the tower, they both forget where they are and rather hastily and rather imprudently spend the next days closed in Blanche flour's room. There, they become intimate. This might have been accelerated by the imminent danger and incoming death, but it is their behaviour and reluctance, which causes them being discovered by an emir's chancellor. Floris comes to the tower with no plan of coming back, and it should not be asked whether Blanche flour could come with a plan because she is not playing an active role within the story. She is a mere damsel in distress, who is waiting almost in "an ivory tower to be saved by her knight in a shining armour." Yet, when they are discovered, it is not Floris' courage, which saves the lovers' lives. It is emir's pity and sympathy, which grants them a pardon.

I would like to raise a question, whether Floris is a good example of a chivalric warrior. Floris is technically not a knight till the end of the story and according to that he also behaves as such. He is not a warrior. He is closer to Paris, a mythical character who was ill with love, than to Achilles. He does not fight and it seems that even though he received an education, he merely follows advice given to him by someone else.

He is not undergoing a journey with perils, which would prove him worthy of her love. He stays in a foreign country in luxury, because he has money and after all he is the future king of Spain. He befriends the porter thanks to Darius and he finds his love because of the porter.

The only time when he can prove himself being worthy is in the scene where they are being judged by the emir. He declares that he will not let down the man who helped him and he will not reveal his name. But right afterwards he divulges the whole story with the name of his culprit. It could be said that it was his truthfulness which saved his life, but in my opinion, it would be slightly farfetched. Therefore not only Blanche flour is a

damsel in distress, but also Floris seems to be a knight in distress. He was save by others on his journey to his love. His only knightly deed was when he decided to go after Blancheflour and therefore fulfilled one of the themes of the romances, being a knight on a quest in order to get his lady back.

Lewis would praise the sentiment of love in this story, because truly the Religion of Love is present. The cup with Paris and Helen refers to Paris' trial, where he chose Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love. The story contains an essence of love, which is so strong, that the idea of not living without each other is so painful that the only solution is to die as well. This particular struggle occurs three times in the story. Once at the beginning, which was already mention, and the second and the third one is when they are sentenced to death. Firstly, they argue who should wear the magical ring, which at the end ends up on the ground. And when the emir decides to slay them instead:

His swerd he braid out of his sschethe,	drew; its
The children for to do to dethe.	
And Blauncheflour pult forth hire swire,	thrust; neck
And Florice gan hire agein tire.	pulled her back
"Ich am a man, ich schal go bifore.	
Thou ne aughtest nought mi deth acore."	suffer
Florice forht his swire pulte	thrust his neck
And Blauncheflour agein hit brutte. ¹²⁷	pulled

Here Blancheflour does not listen to her lover's plea because as well as Floris, even she cannot live without her lover. It could be said that she represents a typically depicted woman or a wife of the Middle Ages. Of course that her behaviour is driven by love, but it could be also stated, that she is not showing any decisive behaviour, because she is a woman. She might have probably accepted her slave-like fate proudly, with her head high, but she is awaiting for others to show her what she should do. She would be a desirable woman, as it was discussed in the section about the position and role of women in the Planagenet England.

Even though it might not be a classical chivalric romance since Floris is not a pious knight and also because he is not really an active savior, he is still a member of a royal court. It is actually Blancheflour's position on the ladder of importance, which

¹²⁷ Eric Kooper, ed., "Floris and Blancheflour."

causes the whole misfortune of the lovers. Therefore it is her status and the approach of his parents, who commence the whole adventure. None of which could have been influenced by her.

4.2. Havelok the Dane

Herkneth to me, gode men -
Wives, maydnes, and alle men -
Of a tale that ich you wile telle,
Wo so it wile here and therto dwelle.¹²⁸

Havelok the Dane is a romance, which mirrors the development of English history. The Danish occupation of England marked the history of the isle, its language, its literature and its ideals as well. Maude Ebbutt says, that the story itself, or the legend about a cruel usurper and a rightful heir, is originally Welsh. This story might have been, however, applied to several small kingdoms falling and raising during the Viking's invasions. The weddings forced on women when the change of a ruler occurred happened in the history of England.¹²⁹

While *Floris and Blancheflour* was written because of its general popularity, literary historians argue that *Havelok the Dane* might have been commissioned by a baron in the north. It was generally accepted that northern noblemen were partly Vikings, who settled mainly in those parts of England.¹³⁰

The romance was written at the end of the 13th century and only two manuscripts survived. One survived only in fragments that is MS Ad. 4407 stored in the Cambridge

¹²⁸ Ronald B. Herzman, Eve Salisbury, and Graham Drake, eds., "Havelok the Dane," in *Four Romances of England: King Horn, Havelok the Dane, Bevis of Hampton, Athelston*, eds. Hezrman, Ronald B., Eve Salisbury, and Graham Drake, (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), accessed October 30, 2015, <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/salisbury-four-romances-of-england-havelok-the-dane>.

¹²⁹ Maude Ebbutt, *Myths and Legends of the British* (Twickenham: Senate, 1998), 73.

¹³⁰ Hezrman, Ronald B., Eve Salisbury, and Graham Drake, "Havelok the Dane: Introduction" in *Four Romances of England: King Horn, Havelok the Dane, Bevis of Hampton, Athelston*, eds. Hezrman, Ronald B., Eve Salisbury, and Graham Drake, (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), accessed October 30, 2015, <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/salisbury-four-romances-of-england-havelok-the-dane-introduction>.

University Library. The one which I am going to use for the analysis, MS Laud Misc. 108., is almost complete and it is stored in Oxford, Bodleian Library.¹³¹

4.2.1. Summary

The story begins with a great king of England, Athelwold, who is dying. He does not know what to do with his kingdom, since his only heir is a still very young daughter. He advises with his councillors and they chose Goodrich, the Earl of Cornwall, as a regent of England. They swear to take care of the young princess and the king dies as a true Christian, in deep penitence. Goodrich becomes powerful and when Goldeboru reaches the age of twenty, he decides to break the oath and usurps England. He imprisons Goldeboru in Dover and guards the castle so she could not flee.

Meanwhile, in Denmark, another brave king dies, leaving two daughters and one son behind. The children were supposed to be guarded by the king's good friend, Earl Goddard. Havelok, and his sisters, Swanborow and Helfled, are nevertheless imprisoned and the girls are later murdered by Goddard. Havelok promises to give Denmark to the usurper, if he spares his life. Goddard commands his servant, Grim to kill the little boy instead. When Grim and Grim's wife see the royal birthmark on Havelok's arm, they decide to spare his life. They know that they are in a dangerous position therefore they decide to leave the kingdom with the whole family. They take a ship and land in England.

When Havelok reaches adulthood, he decides that he cannot be supported and fed by Grim anymore. Thus he becomes a fisherman, because he knows that there is no shame in working. Grim's fishing trade becomes a failure. Havelok is a large man with a large appetite and therefore he is forced to find a job in a castle in Lincoln. Goodrich holds a meeting of noblemen, which is accompanied by several games. When Goodrich sees Havelok winning a game in throwing the stone, he decides that he would be a perfect husband to Goldeboru. He swore to her father, that he would find a strong husband for his daughter. And because he thinks that Havelok is a thrall, his marriage to the princess would cancel Goldeboru's right to inherit England.

Goldeboru insists that she would not marry unless her husband would be of noble origin, but she is helpless. Hence she is forced into a marriage with Havelok. After the wedding they move back to Grim's house, where they discover, that only his five children survived. They have become successful and they can afford to host Havelok and his wife.

¹³¹ Hezrman, Ronald B., Eve Salisbury, and Graham Drake, eds. "Havelok the Dane: Introduction."

During the night, Goldeboru cannot fall asleep because she cannot cope with the idea of being married to a lowborn. But then she sees a light coming out of Havelok's mouth and an angel appears. The Angel informs her, that her husband is of a noble origin and that he will become the future king of England and Denmark. She tells Havelok what she discovered and Havelok decides that the time for his retrieval has come.

He takes Grim's sons and his wife and commences on a journey to Denmark to rightfully claim what is his. There he befriends Earl Ubbe, who later discovers that Havelok is the rightful king. He announces his discovery publically and Havelok gains support of the knights. They capture Goddard, who is then sentenced to death by hanging preceded by flaying alive and drawing through the streets.

Havelok then travels to England to claim what is his by marriage. Goodrich and Havelok fight in a battle, which ends with Goodrich's capture. Goodrich is burned at the stake as a traitor. Then he establishes Ubbe as a governor of Denmark and together with Goldborou rules England.

4.2.2. A Lady Who Knows How Much She is Worth

If Floris was a questionable knight, Havelok is an embodiment of a masculine warrior. He eats enough to ruin a family and he is a mighty god-fearing heir to the throne. Even Goldeboru is a fine lady of noble origin par excellence.

Goldeboru knows how a proper lady should behave. Her father's wish was that she would rule after him. If she would be older he would have no problem with leaving her his kingdom. This was not unusual, as also Henry I was willing to leave his dominions to Matilda. Noblemen could not bear the idea of being ruled by a woman, as it was already stated above, and therefore Stephen was chosen instead. Goldeboru's father asked his advisors:

“Of mi douter, that shal be
Yure levedi after me,
Wo may yemen hire so longe,
Bothen hire and Engelsonde,

For my daughter
[sovereign] lady
Who; protect

But her inner conflict arose during the night, when she was contemplating about her uneasy and insoluble position. All of the sudden, Havelok was enlighten by a holy light and an angel spoke to Goldeboru, that her husband is not a commoner and she does not need to wallow in her despair:

"Goldeboru, lat thi sorwe be!	set aside
For Havelok, that haveth spuset thee,	married
He, kinges sone and kinges eyr,	
That bikenneth that croiz so fayr	betokens
It bikenneth more - that he shal	means
Denemark haven and Englonde al.	
He shal ben king strong and stark,	
Of Englonde and Denemark -	
That shal thu wit thin eyne seen,	eyes
And tho shalt quen and levedi ben!"	lady ¹³⁵

Goldeboru is soothed by the news delivered by the angel. She has a husband who is not only royal born but who proves by his behavior and deeds that he is worthy of being king. She tells Havelok what destiny awaits them and almost *deus ex machina* moment resolves Goldeboru's troubles. Havelok is worthy of Goldeboru because of his royal origin.

Goldeboru is an example of the most important and most powerful woman in any state, a girl who was born to be a queen. As it was stated above, this particular romance bears several influences. If she would be a princess living in the tenth or the eleventh century, her story would be similar to those scarcely witness women of the Anglo-Saxon period. She would be comparable to wife of Cnut, a creator of a Scandinavian Empire covering England, Norway, Denmark and part of Sweden. His wife Ælfgifu was a daughter of an important nobleman in the north of England, whose marriage to Cnut arranged by Cnut's father, Sweyn Forkbeard. The marriage was supposed to strengthen the conquered domain. Her family was heavily persecuted by the Anglo-Saxon king Æthelred the Unready. A lot is not known a lot about Ælfgifu, but the sources revealed that she was left behind with a small baby when the political situation forced Cnut to flee

¹³⁵ Ronald B. Hezrman, Eve Salisbury, and Graham Drake, eds, "Havelok the Dane."

England. Later she was sent to Denmark with the corpse of her father-in-law, where she gave birth to another child.

Historians argue that she might have been given some responsibilities and partly governed some regions in Cnut's domains.¹³⁶ What is nevertheless unusual is the question of Cnut's second marriage with Emma, which made him a bigamist. It was probably more of a political move than anything else, because Emma of Normandy was a widow after Æthelred the Unready and mother of Edward III the Confessor. It is not known what was Ælfgifu's opinion but it was not her place to raise any objections. She was a mere woman. The sources do not comment on her status afterwards. The question of faith, since Christian faith condemns bigamy, is also difficult to answer. The Church did not hold a strong position within the society at the beginning of the tenth century as it did later. Cnut was a Christian and he repaired several churches and was a donor of several expensive gifts, which probably silenced most of the rebukes.¹³⁷

The position of women was uneasy in the early medieval times. They were in an inferior position and they were not able to decide for themselves. Such as the case of Goldeboru, who was married against her will. This situation probably occurred often during the times where Vikings were present in England, but in the romance, it works as part of a plot, which creates the obstructions leading towards the happy ending.

The romance was written at the end of the 13th century, during the reign of Edward I Plantagenet, the conqueror of Wales and the hammer of the Scots. As it was stated above, the romance was probably written for a northern nobleman. Therefore if the author mirrors the realities of his world in his work, Eleanor of Castile, the queen of England, should be compared to Goldeboru. Eleanor of Castile was a daughter of a king, Ferdinand III of Castile. Her marriage was a political mean to settle the debate over Gascony, a part of Aquitaine, which by then still belonged to England. By the marriage, Edward would have the claims to Gascony.

What Eleanor makes interesting and comparable to Goldeboru, is that she also followed her husband on his crusade. She supported him even during the second war with barons, which was mainly against her father in law.¹³⁸ While Havelok travelled to Denmark with Goldeboru in order to reclaim what was rightfully his, Edward took a cross

¹³⁶ Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women, A Social History of Women in England 450-1500*, 44.

¹³⁷ Christine Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 65.

¹³⁸ Michael Prestwich, *Plantagenet England 1225-1360*, 64.

and took his wife with him. Eleanor was a good queen as well as it was predicted for Goldeboru. She was a benefactor of literature and lived as an embodiment of a true lady, being a patron of the only scriptorium in Northern Europe, buying expensive goods and supporting the Church.¹³⁹ She was, in a medieval point of view, a true equal to her husband. Her position in the society rose in importance when she finally gave a birth to a son, Edward. When she died, Edward I was deeply sadden, and built the Eleanor Cross, a system of monuments, which were supposed to commemorate every stop of a funeral procession from Lincoln, the place of her death, to Westminster.¹⁴⁰

Goldeboru's behaviour as a queen is not thoroughly discussed at the end of the romance. Nevertheless, she would probably copy Eleanor's behaviour. The author reveals at the end of the story that:

He lovede hir and she him so	
That neyther owe mithe be	anywhere
Fro other, ne no joye se	away from
But if he were togidere bothe.	Unless; they
Nevere yete no weren he wrothe	angry at each other
For here love was ay newe -	their; always
Nevere yete wordes ne grewe	anger
Bitwene hem hwar of ne lathe	hostile
Mithe rise ne no wrathe.	arise

He geten children hem bitwene	
Sones and doughtres rith fivetene,	precisely fifteen
Hwar-of the sones were kinges alle,	Of whom
So wolde God it sholde bifalle,	
And the douhtres alle quenes:	
Him stondes wel that god child strenes! ¹⁴¹	

¹³⁹ Loveday Lewes Gee, *Women, Art, and Patronage from Henry III to Edward III: 1216-1377* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), 10.

¹⁴⁰ Michael Prestwich, *Plantagenet England 1225-1360*, 565.

¹⁴¹ Ronald B. Hezrman, Eve Salisbury, and Graham Drake, eds, "Havelok the Dane."

Thus they had a very happy marriage filled with love and more importantly, Goldeboru passed the test of being a true rightful queen, delivering 15 children, which was the most important role of a woman. They became a powerful couple, and were able to give all their children a royal status. They have succeeded as a royal pair, since they secured the existence of their family.

4.3. The King of Tars

Herkneth to me bothe eld and ying,
For Marie's love, that swete thing,
Al hou a wer bigan¹⁴²

The third romance chosen for analysis is *The King of Tars*, which is an English romance taking place in Damascus. The main character is the princess, who converts her pagan husband. She is the most active heroine in the scope of all three chosen romances.

Christian women helping to convert their husbands is not an unknown element in history. Bede mentions in *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* royal wives, who help the Church¹⁴³. Another aspect of faith is visible, and that is a mirroring clash with pagans. This was a well-known fact at the early beginnings of the 14th century, when *The King of Tars* was written. Crusades were still present in the memory of people, even though the fight for Jerusalem was long lost.

The theme of a princess being married to a pagan king was popular during the medieval ages.¹⁴⁴ *The King of Tars* survived in three manuscripts, one being stored in Edinburgh Library, that is the Auchinleck Manuscript, Advocates 19.2.1. This manuscript will be used as a source of analysis. Other two manuscripts are Simeon's manuscript MS Additional 22283 stored in Oxford and Vernon's manuscript MS Eng. Poet. A. 1. kept in Bodleian Library in Oxford.

¹⁴² John H. Chandler, ed., *The King of Tars* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2015), accessed online November 1, 2015, <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/chandler-the-king-of-tars>.

¹⁴³ Beda Ctihodný, *Církevní dějiny národa Anglů*, trans. Kincl, Jaromír, and Magdalena Moravcová, (Praha: Agro, 2008), 107.

¹⁴⁴ John H. Chandler, ed., "The King of Tars: Introduction," in *The King of Tars*, ed. John H. Chandler, (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2015), accessed November 1, 2015, <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/chandler-the-king-of-tars-introduction>.

4.3.1. Summary

The story of *The King of Tars*, that is Tartary, is the story of a nameless princess, who is forced to become a wife of The Sultan of Damascus after his bloody ride in Tars. She sacrifices herself in order to save her kingdom.

The Sultan is glad that he made her father give up his daughter, but he is unwilling to marry her unless she converts to Islam. She is saddened by the idea of losing Christ, which is the most horrific deed one could do, because her soul would be condemned to Hell. As well as Goldeboru's problem, even the princess reaches comfort during the night. Christ, who appears in her dream, tells her, that she should pretend being a Muslim and that God will lead her. After the wedding, the Sultan holds a knight tournament, which mirrors the author's imprinting of realities of the west into the far Damascus. Soon the princess bears an offspring. However, she gives birth to a lump of flesh without form. The Sultan discovers that she must have pretended the conversion and accuses her of pretence, because that is the only possible reason for the occurrence of such a creature.

The princess nevertheless proposes a test, which should show whose religion is the right one and whose god is the only real one. The Sultan yields to the test, which consist of putting the creature into the "house of god" of each religion. With the power of prayer, the shape of the child should change. The Sultan thus prays for the child in a mosque in front of an altar where the baby lays. The child does not change its form and the princess asks the Sultan to free a priest from a prison. The priest baptizes the lump. When he does, the lump becomes human and shapes itself into a form of a child. The Sultan realizes that the Christian God is the real one and he lets himself be baptized. Another proof of the religion is that by the power of baptism the Sultan changes colour of skin. While a pagan, he is black as the Devil. Being a Christian, his skin turns into white. After the baptism, the Sultan issues a command that his thralls should convert to Christianity as well or they will be executed.

The Sultan then helps his father in law and both Christian rulers fight the Saracens, respectively their 5 kings. They win over the pagans and they live rightfully and after death, their souls end up in Heaven.

4.3.2. The White Princess

The name of the romance *The King of Tars* might suggest a story about a king warrior, but it is his nameless daughter, who is in the centre of attention. The author does not reveal much information about her, especially her name, but he describes her looks:

Non feirer woman might ben —	No fairer;
As white as fether of swan.	as [the] feather

The meiden was schast and blithe of chere	chaste; happy in appearance
With rode red so blosme on brere	complexion as red as; briar
And eyghen stepe and gray.	eyes shining
With lowe scholders and white swere	lovely; neck
Hir for to sen was gret preier	see; entreaty
Of princes proud and play.	playful; ¹⁴⁵

She was an ideal of medieval beauty, white and chaste. Therefore it was a horrible stroke for her father to lose her to a pagan sultan, whose black skins was signaling evil, and who was violent. The Sultan's ride with sixty thousand Saracens made the princess to sacrifice herself as a true Christian.

“Sir, lete me be the soudan's wiif	wife
And rere na more cunttek no striif	raise; violence, strife
As hath ben here bifore.	
For me hath mani man ben schent,	killed
Cités nomen and tounes brent;	taken; towns
Allas that ich was bore!	I was born ¹⁴⁶

Already mentioned Marbod of Rennes would use this particular extract as a weapon towards women, because it is the beauty of the princess, which leads into the bloodshed. In Marbod's eyes, she would be technically the evil, because her beauty propels the Sultan to attack. In the narrative of the story, the princess represents all the Christian values. The story is a story of the dichotomous battle between the evil, that is Islam being a pagan religion, and good, Christianity. In Lewis' fashion, this particular

¹⁴⁵ John H. Chandler, ed., *The King of Tars*.

¹⁴⁶ John H. Chandler, ed., *The King of Tars*.

romance serves as an allegory of the fight between those two forces. She is, illogically speaking, the knight in the story, whose sword is represented by the faith.

The princess' inner conflict is important because it is the inner conflict of a warrior. She is not lured by the lavish and luxurious chambers which were given to her, because she is, as a true Christian, risen above the worldly life. It is her soul, which is on a stake.

Yete hir thought withouten lesing	it seemed to her; lying
Als sche lay in hir swevening	swoon
(That selcouthe was to rede)	strange; tell
That blac hounde hir was folweing.	
Thurth might of Jhesu, Heven king,	Through
Spac to hir in manhede	manly demeanor
In white clothes als a knight,	
And seyde to hir, "Mi swete wight,	lady (person)
No tharf thee nothing drede	You need not dread anything;
Of Ternagaunt no of Mahoun.	
Thi Lord that suffred passioun	
Schal help thee at thi nede." ¹⁴⁷	

It is Christ himself, dressed as a knight, who gives her hope and eases her soul. He calls her "mi swete wight", my sweet lady, a lady chosen to bring Christianity to a pagan land. God does not forsake his sheep and he helps her in a time of need. It calms her down, because now she knows, that she has a purpose and that she is taken care of. Therefore, she decides to falsely accept Allah.

The crucial moment in the story is the delivery of the baby, or better a lump of flesh. If the story of *The King of Tars* happened in a purely Christian environment, a baby which would be born of the marriage would signalize a rotten character. It would be taken as a punishment of God. It was a woman's responsibility to bear a healthy child, which could continue the royal line, because not only one's hunger for fame and glory, but also constructing of a family empire was hidden behind the rulers' acts. By this it was shown, that they would fail as a couple in the most basic function and the situation had to be solved in favor of the true religion.

¹⁴⁷ John H. Chandler, ed., *The King of Tars*.

The power of Christianity is proven by the two baptisms. As it was stated before, the lump becomes a beautiful boy, “feirer child might non be bore, it no hadde never a lime forlore.”¹⁴⁸ It cannot be said that the male sex was preferred. The medieval times were androcentric and it was more profitable for a family to have a boy than a girl, who needed to be equipped with a dowry.

One of the duties of a wife in the Medieval Ages was to keep the husband on “the right path,” that means to ensure that her husband follows the rules of a true Christian. Every wife should be a priest to her husband. It was a generally accepted truth that women had skills to persuade their husband to do what is right. She was, technically, responsible for the salvation of the couple.¹⁴⁹ This usage of a wife’s ability towards her husband was used even during the first periods of Christian missions. Already mentioned Bede was aware of this practice. There is an example in the Bible as well, where St. Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians mentions that an unbelieving husband is sanctified by a religious wife (1 Corinthians 7:14). The corpus of saints of Christianity contains many women, who helped to spread the faith in her marriage. The nameless princess could be compared with the character of St. Cecile, a Roman martyr and the saint of music. Cecile claimed that she was watched over by an Angel. She refused to consummate the marriage, because she vowed to chastity. She converted her pagan husband Valerian, who became a martyr as well.¹⁵⁰

The conversion scene where the Sultan accepts the new faith is symbolically interesting:

The Cristen prest hight Cleophas;	was called
He cleped the soudan of Damas	named
After his owen name.	own
His hide that blac and lothely was	loathly
Al white bicom thurth Godes gras	through; grace;
And clere withouten blame.	
And when the soudan seye that sight,	saw

¹⁴⁸ John H. Chandler, ed., *The King of Tars*.

¹⁴⁹ Silvana Vecchio, “The Good Wife,” 115-116.

¹⁵⁰ Bertha Ellen Lovewell, *The Life of St. Cecilia* (Boston: Lamson, Wolfe, and Company, 1898), 17.

Than leved he wele on God almight;
His care went to game.¹⁵¹

believed
turned into mirth

For a modern reader the change of colour might be a racist remark, that Christianity is the religion of the white while Islam is the religion of the black. That assumption would be entirely wrong. Firstly, it should be stated that early Christianity was based in Africa and the Middle East. Therefore colour did not play such a role in Middle Ages, even St. Maurice was black. The shift from its original place to Europe triggered that most of the saints, Jesus Christ included, were pictured as the people who worshipped them. The change of colour in the story symbolizes something entirely different. It symbolizes the metamorphosis of the Sultan from a purely beastly usurper to a true Christian, who is then able to fight against other nonbelievers with his father in law. His “hide that blac and lothely was” sounds as a description of a hide of an animal, almost like a skin of a billy goat, a personification of a devil. He becomes white since the colour is the symbol of the Christ, virginity and purity. He turn into a new man, his soul purified of all the evil.

After this deed, the nameless princess accepts the husband, because he becomes equal to her in the eyes of the religion. The nameless princess is the strongest woman in all three discussed romances, because she alone is her saviour, she is a damsel in distress whose religion leads to her liberation. She does not fight and her liberation is only on a purely spiritual level. She defeats the usurper, who happens to be her husband, by turning him into a Christian. She comes up with the test which will eventually help her in the situation. She does not overstep the boundaries established by the society, but she is able to reach solution within the space given to women. She fulfils her role as a Christian and a wife as well.

4.4. The Winds of Change?

Whether the chivalric romances changed the position of women in the society is not an easy question to answer. Partly it was already stated above, in the section discussing the emergence of courtly love and chivalric romances. The heroines in the chosen romances did not overstepped the rules set up by the society. Blancheflour was an inactive woman, whose steps were conducted by men. She was sold into a harem by

¹⁵¹ John H. Chandler, ed., *The King of Tars*.

Floris' father. Men decided whether she will live in the situation which should lead into her death. Goldeboru was a royal heiress, who might have possessed a certain amount of power, but it was her guardian, who took control over her. It was stated, that her marriage with Havelok was happy, but she served as an intermediary between him and her inheritance. When R. Howard Bloch talked about the importance of women's wealth, Goldeboru would be an example par excellence. The nameless princess in *The King of Tars* was also a traditional woman in a sense of religion. She helped her husband to become a true Christian warrior by a miracle of baptism. She was an active heroine, whose cleverness resolved her uneasy situation. But all the steps she overcame during her journey led into her husband's elevation.

In my opinion, the position of women was not changed by the arrival of chivalric romances per se. Chivalric romances were novel in a sense of incorporating love and women in the story. They gave them a certain role in the story which commonly served the same role. There was usually a damsel in distress which should be saved by a knight on his journey to masculinity. The chivalric romances were listened to by both sexes. For men, it served as an assurance of their superior position within the society. Women, in my opinion, liked the idea of love, which was frequently lacking in their politically based marriages. The situation is not so different from the urge of modern female readers who buy Harlequin novels. The only difference is that chivalric romances were written for the medieval listeners, who were used to sophisticated signs of allegory and the ever-present existence of God. The position of women remained, yet, the same and it took several centuries of development to equal the position of women and men.

Nevertheless there were some influences of chivalric romances and courtly love visible on the society. The morality within the society changed, since brutal abduction was outlawed. Rape and kidnapping, which was present in previous years, was not so common.¹⁵² The behaviour towards women was based on more sophisticated levels, where language became crucial. I would say that while the position and role of women in the society remained the same, the means of how to reach women to the position changed. Women still had to marry whoever their parents decided to, *Floris and Blanchefleur* is purely fictional in this case. But the whole environment changed. The evidence suggests

¹⁵² George Duby, "The Courtly Model," in *A History of Women in the West, II. Silences of the Middle Ages*, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 261.

that knights' education contained the knowledge of poetry as well.¹⁵³ Poetry and literature in general became an active participant. Women became a bait for knights, who were put to the test to prove their value in the society. And because of the emergence of courtly love and chivalric romances, it was not only their combat skills, but also their ability of seduction which were tested.

In my opinion, chivalric romances overall strengthen the ideal of a woman, because of its repetitive features regarding the behaviour and appearance of women. It was easier to target women by the presence of the heroines in the awareness of the members of court. Women who were not fulfilling the demands correctly could have been send into an exile, either political or social.

¹⁵³ George Duby, "The Courtly Model," 261.

5. Conclusion

The chivalric romances were one of the dominant genres in the medieval corpus, which contained heroines within their narratives. They were read aloud to the circle of noblemen, who expected to find the ideals of the society present in the stories. While in older literature of the preceding times, women were not actively present within the literary production, women in chivalric romances had a certain role within the story. The popularity of chivalric romances changed the environment of the society. Courtly love became an active participant in the lives of the then upper society.

Enigmatic occurrence of courtly love has several theories, which were discussed with the analysis of C. S. Lewis's *The Allegory of Love* and R. Howard Bloch's *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*. Lewis finds the origin of the phenomenon in the possible impacts of the Classical culture in Christian feudal environment. Allegory present in the works is important, because it was ever-present in the perception of medieval people. Bloch sees romantic love as an outcome of a long development of misogynic discourse, which covers all the works which contain the word "woman." For him, the reason behind the invention of love is purely pragmatic. Women as heiresses possessed a certain power within the society, because they could have brought wealth to their possible suitors. Love as such is a sophisticated manner how to reach the possession, which was taken less decently in the previous periods.

The position of women yielded to set of rules and habits which were created by an androcentric society. In the analysis of three chosen novels, *Floris and Blancheflour*, *Havelok the Dane*, and *The King of Tars*, it is visible that heroines did not overstepped the boundaries determined for them. Blancheflour was an inactive lady, whose faith was in the hands of men. Her passivity copies the reality of a large amount of women, who lived in the Plantagenet England. They might have represent a role of a dutiful wife and benefactor of arts, but their decisions relied on opinions of men.

Goldeboru, the main heroin of *Havelok the Dane* is a royal princess, whose marriage brought Havelok England. She is a noblewoman, who is married against her will. When she discovers that her husband is of a royal origin, she turns herself into a supportive wife. She follows her husband on his quest. It was expected from Goldeboru to become a loyal and understanding wife, as it was shown in the comparison with Eleanor of Castile, wife of Edward I.

The nameless princess in *The King of Tars* represents the spiritual role of a wife. Wives were supposed to follow the religious rule and they were supposed to control their husbands as well. The Princess contributes to conversion of the Sultan of Damask, her husband. *The King of Tars* is unusual in its absence of a masculine knight. Jesus Christ and religion functions as the saviour in the narrative of the story. The princess' behaviour copies behaviour of women who were married into marriages with different religion. Her position is the same as of the princess present in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*. She could be compared to the number of first female martyrs, such was St. Cecile, as well.

The position of women was not changed with the emergence of courtly love and chivalric romances. It changed the environment, which became more courteous and sophisticated. The knight were expected to use the language of love in the game of seduction. Nevertheless, the aim was the same. Women were supposed to be conquered because of their wealth. The adultery and love present in the literature was purely imaginary. The marriages in the higher ranks of the society represented political alliances and they were scarcely entered because of the mutual affection. The development which led into the contemporary position of women was in its beginning and the mayor changes happened in later periods.

Resumé

Předložená diplomová práce se zabývá postavením ženy ve středověku v komparaci s ženskými postavami ve vybraných rytířských romancích, tj. *Floris and Blancheflour*, *Havelok the Dane*, a *The King of Tars*. Rytířské romance patřili v době středověku k populárním žánrům světské literatury. Autoři těchto romancí zpravidla dostávali zakázky na jejich tvorbu od šlechtických rodů. Ti od autora očekávali příběh, který by kopíroval či znázorňoval život a ideje, které tato společnost zastávala. Proto je možné k rytířským romancím přistupovat jako k historickému pramenu.

Středověké romance by nevznikly bez jednoho ze svých námětů, kurtoazní lásky. Kurtoazní láska se takřka záhadně objevila na konci 11. století v ekonomicky vyspělých částech jižní Francie. K této změně došlo kvůli několika fenoménům, která jsou pro Francii charakterní. V předešlých obdobích musel šlechtic se svým dvorem cestovat, protože ho nevyspělá ekonomika nemohla živit a podporovat na delší dobu. V momentě, kdy bylo zemědělství schopno uživit jeho stálé sídelní město, vznikají dvory se sofistikovanou dvorskou kulturou a zvyklostmi. Šlechtic tímto krokem nicméně ztrácí dohled nad svým dominiem a proto k sobě zve nejdůležitější šlechtice v zemi.

Nepropracovaný feudální systém středověké Francie vytvořil velké dominia, která nabývala na síle a přesahovala dominia královská. Proto vzniká velký počet rytířů, kteří se zavazují důležitým šlechticům. Tito chudí rytíři mají malou šanci k sňatku, a proto jsou ve vznikající dvorské kultuře, která se vyznačuje trubadúřskou poezií, nuceni upírat svou pozornost k manželce svého pána, která symbolizuje ideál ženy.

Existuje několik teorií, které vysvětlují, jak mohla tato změna vnímání lásky nastat. V této práci se zaměřuji na dvě hlavní teorie, a to je teorie C.S. Lewise a R. Howarda Blocha. C. S. Lewis ve své knize *The Allegory of Love* tvrdí, že kurtoazní láska neboli změna sentimentu nastala díky kombinaci kulturního dědictví klasické literatury, jako bylo dílo Ovidia. Toto dědictví poté reaguje na nové prostředí, a to prostředí křesťansko-feudální. Lewis mluví o takzvané feudalizaci lásky. Zatímco v předešlých dílech literatury vidíme jako důležitý svazek pána a jeho leníka či rytíře, v dílech spojených kurtoazní láskou vidíme ty samé charakterové vlastnosti přenesené na vztah rytíře a dámy. Co se týče reakce křesťanského prostředí, Lewis mluví o přenesení satiry, kterou vidíme v Ovidiově *Umění milovat*, na křesťanství. Díky toho vzniká náboženství lásky, které kopíruje křesťanství v jeho boji dobra a zla, které je zapotřebí k dosáhnutí jedinečné pravé lásky.

Náboženství lásky je podle Lewise jeden ze čtyř znaků, které změna sentimentu, jak nazývá vznik dvorské lásky, symbolizuje. Dalším znakem je zdvořilost a pokora, které jsou spojeny s existencí stálých dvorů. Zdvořilostí Lewis myslí vybrané chování, které se objevovalo mezi členy vyšší společnosti na dvorech, zvláště ve vztahu k ženám. Pokoru podle Lewise nalezneme ve vztahu leníka a jeho pána. Leník je vůči svému pánovi pokorný a s ponížeností přijímá svoji službu.

Posledním znakem, kterým se vyznačovala změna sentimentu, byla nevěra. Ve společnosti, která chápe manželství jako ryze utilitární svazek založený na politických náladách a vztazích ve společnosti, muselo docházet k idealizaci nevěry. Pravdou je, že manželství nebyla chápána jako svazky založené na vzájemných citech. Pokud se díváme na manželství prismatem křesťanství, zjistíme, že manželství slouží k plození dětí a zachování linie. Zde můžou jedinci realizovat své sexuální touhy z důvodu zachování rodu. Manželé málokdy chápali manželky jako své družky hodné citu. Šlechtici povětšinou realizovali své tužby v aférách. Ženy byly ovšem vnímány jako majetek manžela a nevěra u nich byla teoreticky zcela vyloučena. Nemanželské děti plozené vdanou matkou by měly pro rod nedozírné následky.

Bloch chápe zrození lásky, jak ji chápeme v 20. a 21. století, jinak. Bloch nazývá každý text, který obsahuje slovo žena, za misogynní. A právě rozborem misogynních textů se snaží dokázat, že to byly ony, které nastartovaly celkovou změnu. Tvrdí, že tautologické opakování formulací církevních otců a jiných důležitých filozofů uznávaných ve středověku vytvořilo esenci ženy, která nebyla srovnatelná s realitou. Topos ženy, který podle něj ve středověku vznikl, a jeho vývoj vedl k změně sentimentu. Tento vývoj má několik stupňů. Prvním stupněm byly výrazně antifeministické práce církevních autorů, které pak plynule přešly k adoraci Panny Marie. Mariánský kult změnil esenci ženy, protože soustředil pozornost autorů na kladné ženské stránky. Z obdivu ženy posléze v esenci ženy autoři upřednostňovali její dekorativní vlastnosti, tedy její zevnějšek. Poté psaný diskurz přešel do kurtoazní lásky propagované trubadúry. Láska k ženě byla ale motivována pragmaticky. Ženy mohly dědit a láska se stala nástrojem, jak majetku ženy dosáhnout.

Rytířské romance mají bližší vztah ke svým čtenářům, nebo spíše posluchačům, než pozdější žánry. Jejich posluchači byli, jak už bylo řečeno v úvodu, také mecenáši jejich autorů. To způsobovalo, že vznikaly náměty, které byly charakteristické pro danou oblast. Jean Bodel, středověký francouzský básník, proto hovořil o třech druzích romancí podle jejich tematiky. Korpus tohoto žánru rozdělil na Matter of England, Matter of

France a Matter of Rome. Matter of England je termín označující všechny romance, které jsou spojeny s mýtickou postavou krále Artuše a jeho rytířů. Matter of Rome se týká romancí inspirovaných antikou a Matter of France označuje romance, které se soustředí na osobu Karla Velikého.

Romance dosáhly v Anglii popularity během vlády Plantagenetů. Tato francouzská dynastie nastoupila na trůn Anglie po dlouholeté občanské válce mezi Matildou a Štěpánem. Anglie byla již tehdy frankofonní oblastí, kterou poznamenal příchod Normanů v roce 1066. Plantageneti tento proud posílili. Manželka prvního krále rodu Plantagenetů, Jindřicha II., ovlivnila přísun rytířských romancí a trubadúrské poezie. Eleanor Akvitánská pocházela právě z těch oblastí Francie, jejichž prostředí dalo vzniknout dvorské kultuře. Byla štedrou mecenáškou umění, kolem které se soustředila skupina básníků a autorů. Anglická produkce byla také částečně frankofonní, protože to byla francouzská šlechta, která si její tvorbu objednávala. Mnoho romancí, které vznikly ve francouzském prostředí, bylo ovšem inspirováno anglickou historií. Král Artuš je původem anglický stejně jako Tristan a Isolda. V případě Tristana a Isoldy se jedná o ústně předávaný keltský příběh milenců z Cornwallu.

Postavení žen ve středověké Anglii bylo zkoumáno prvně z pohledu všeobecného, tj. církvi a tradicí ovládaného. Hlavní hrdinky vybraných rytířských romancí se eventuálně staly královnami. Proto byl brán zřetel právě na ženy v nejvyšších šlechtických kruzích. Co bylo ovšem předmětem této práce, bylo postavení žen ve srovnání s jejími fiktivními protějšky.

Blancheflour z *Floris and Blancheflour* je křesťanskou dcerou mrtvého francouzského rytíře. Stane se blízkou společnicí španělského prince. Zamilují se do sebe, ale nepřející rodiče budoucího krále způsobí, že je prodána do Babylonu. Tam si ji vybere emír za budoucí manželku. Floris se rozhodne Blancheflour následovat. Tím ovšem jeho aktivita končí a oba milenci jsou napospas dobré vůli emíra, který se rozhodne ušetřit jejich život.

Blancheflour zde reprezentuje typicky submisivní ženu středověku. I když je na začátku romance zmíněno, že díky Florisova citu získá vzdělání, není v pozdější ději tato dovednost jakkoliv využita. Nebouří se svému osudu a s hrdostí ho přijímá. Nevyvíjí ovšem žádnou aktivitu během děje. V této romanci je silně znázorněno Lewisovo náboženství lásky, neboť je to právě ryzí cit mezi milenci, který zachrání jejich život.

Goldeboru, hlavní hrdinka druhé vybrané romance, *Havelok the Dane*, je korunní dědičkou anglického krále. Po jeho smrti se nicméně Anglie zhostí uzurpátor Goodrich,

který Goldeboru uvězní. Podobný osud postihne také hlavního hrdinu a dědice Dánska, Haveloka, který skončí jako nuzný podomek v Anglii. Goodrich se rozhodne Goldeboru provdat za Haveloka, protože by jeho nuzný původ podle práva zbavil Goldeboru nároku na anglický trůn. Goldeboru je královská dědička, která si je dobře vědoma své pozice a možné moci ve společnosti. Když ji v noci hlas anděla prozradí, že je její manžel budoucí král Anglie i Dánska, Havelok se stane v jejich očích roven. Následuje ho tedy na jeho cestě k získání obou zemí.

Goldeboru se promění v podporující manželku-královnu, která by byla srovnatelná s Eleanor Castilskou, manželkou Eduarda I. Ta podporovala manžela během křížových výprav i vojenských tažení. Byla mecenáškou umění a církve. Autor romane nenechává prsto Goldeboru jako královně, nicméně na konci víme, že společně vládli Anglii a že dohromady zplodili 15 potomků, jimž všem zajistili královský titul. Tím se Goldeboru stává symbolem správné královny, protože splnila nejdůležitější roli ženy, mateřství, a zajistila kontinuitu rodu. Goldeboru je rozdílná od Blanchefflower protože čeká, až se Havelok prokáže, že je stejně cenný jako ona. Tím je v příběhu aktivnější než Blanchefflower. Nicméně i Goldeboru funguje v androcentrické společnosti a je to rozhodnutí mužů, které řídí její osud.

Nejaktivnější hrdinkou je bezejmenná princezna z poslední romane, *The King of Tars*. Damašský sultán slyšel o kráse princezny z Tarsu, která se obětuje jako správná křesťanka ke sňatku s agresivním muslimem. Sultán si ji nicméně odmítá vzít, pokud nepřestoupí k islámu. V noci se ve snu objeví Ježíš Kristus v hávu rytíře, který ji oznámí, aby předstírala konverzi, protože víra ji ochrání. Princezna se tedy podvolí a brzy očekává budoucího následníka trůnu. Nicméně porodí hroudu masa, která se nepodobá dítěti. Sultán její lest odhalí a princezna ho vyzve k testu víry, kde modlitba prokáže či náboženství je pravé. Sultánova modlitba v mešitě neuspěje, ale křest zázračně promění narozenou kreaturu v malého chlapce. Sultán se poté nechá také pokřtít a přidá se ke svému tchánovi v boji proti jinověrcům.

Tato romane je výjimečná, protože neobsahuje postavu rytíře, který by zachraňoval dámu v nesnázích. Je to naopak hlavní hrdinka, která se dokáže zachránit vlastním přičiněním. Princezna přivede ke křesťanství nejen krále, ale také jeho poddané, čímž se technicky stává misionářem. K roli manželky-královny ve středověku patřil také blízký vztah k církvi. V počátcích křesťanství v Anglii bylo manželství jednou z cest, jak dosáhnout konverze. Roli těchto anglosaských žen kopíruje také princezna v *The King of Tars*.

Na komparaci třech ženských postav rytířských romancí vidíme, že ani jedna nepřestoupila hranice, které označovaly sféru žen ve společnosti. Otázka, zda rytířské role dosáhly změny postavení žen ve společnosti, je problematická. Podle mého názoru rytířské romance a kurtoazní láska přinesly lepší zacházení k ženám a jiné prostředky, jak dosáhnout k jejímu bohatství a výhodám. Dobré mravy zjemnily chování mužů, pro které se znalost kultury a poezie stala klíčovou, pokud chtěli zastávat určité postavení na dvoře. Podle mého názoru korpus rytířských romancí obsahující ženské hrdinky typu Blancheflour, Goldeboru, a bezejmenné princezny, ještě umocnil ideál, kterému se žena měla rovnat. Ženy v romancích fungovaly jako určité návnady či ceny, které čekaly na rytíře na konci jeho cesty k mužnosti. Důležité změny, které pomohly dosáhnout postavení žen v západní Evropě tak, jak je známe, nastaly až v pozdějších dějinných obdobích.

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Anotace

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Hlavním cílem této práce je komparace postavení tří ženských postav z rytířských romancí *Floris and Blancheflour*, *Havelok the Dane*, a *The King of Tars*, s postavením žen ve středověku. Hlavní hrdinky těchto románů nepřekračovaly hranice, které středověká společnost určovala ženám. Rytířské romance byly psány v androcentrickém prostředí a jejich popularita nezlepšila postavení žen ve společnosti. Naopak chování a postavení hrdinek v naracích umocňovaly ideální vlastnosti, které měla podle středověkého prisma žena mít. V případě těchto romancí se jedná o submisivitu, podporu manžela a zbožnost.

Annotation

Author:	Bc. Tereza Kalousková
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The present work compares the position of women in the Middle Ages with female characters of three chosen chivalric romances, *Floris and Blancheflour*, *Havelok the Dane*, and *The King of Tars*. The heroines within the stories did not overstep boundaries which were defined by the medieval society. The chivalric romances were a product of an androcentric environment and their popularity did not improve the position of women. On the contrary, the behaviour of the heroines in the narratives strengthen the women's ideal. The qualities which were required were also pliability, piousness and supportive behaviour towards one's husband, as it is in the cases of the chosen heroines.